

HOUSEHOLD WORDS,



CHRISTMAS STORIES.

1851—1858.

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

CONSISTING OF

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS AS WE GROW OLDER.
A ROUND OF STORIES BY THE CHRISTMAS FIRE. 3
ANOTHER ROUND OF STORIES BY THE CHRISTMAS FIRE.
THE SEVEN POOR TRAVELLERS.
THE HOLLY-TREE INN.
THE WRÊCK OF "THE GOLDEN MARY."
THE PERILS OF CERTAIN ENGLISH PRISONERS.
A HOUSE TO LET.

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WHAT CHRISTMAS IS, AS WE GROW OLDER

TIME was, with most of us, when Christmas Day encircling all our limited world like a magic ring, left nothing out for us to miss or seek; bound together all our home enjoyments, affections, and hopes; grouped every thing and every one around the Christmas fire; and made the little picture shining in our bright young eyes, complete.

Time came, perhaps, all so soon! when our thoughts overleaped that narrow boundary; when there was some one (very dear, we thought then, very beautiful, and absolutely perfect) wanting to the fulness of our happiness; when we were wanting too (or we thought so, which did just as well) at the Christmas hearth by which that some one sat; and when we intertwined with every wreath and garland of our life that some one's name.

That was the time for the bright visionary Christmases which have long arisen from us to shew faintly, after summer rain, in the palest edges of the rainbow! That was the time for the beatified enjoyment of the things that were to be, and never were, and yet the things that were so real in our resolute hope that it would be hard to say, now, what realities achieved since, have been stronger!

What! Did that Christmas never really come when we and the priceless pearl who was our young choice were received, after the happiest of totally impossible marriages, by the two united families previously at daggers-drawn on our account? When brothers and sisters in law who had always been rather cool to us before our relationship was effected, perfectly dotted on us, and when fathers and mothers overwhelmed us with unlimited incomes? Was that Christmas dinner never really eaten, after which we arose, and generously and eloquently rendered honor to our late rival, present in the company, then and there exchanging friendship and forgiveness, and founding an attachment, not to be surpassed in Greek or Roman story, which subsisted until death? Has that same

rival long ceased to care for that same priceless pearl, and married for money, and become usurious? Above all, do we really know, now, that we should probably have been miserable if we had won and worn the pearl, and that we are better without her?

That Christmas when we had recently achieved so much fame; when we had been carried in triumph somewhere, for doing something great and good; when we had won an honored and ennobled name, and arrived and were received at home in a shower of tears of joy; is it possible that that Christmas has not come yet?

And is our life here, at the best, so constituted that, pausing as we advance at such a noticeable mile-stone in the track as this great birthday, we look back on the things that never were, as naturally and full as gravely as on the things that have been and are gone, or have been and still are? If it be so, and so it seems to be, must we come to the conclusion, that life is little better than a dream, and little worth the loves and strivings that we crowd into it?

No! ~~Re~~ Be such miscalled philosophy from us, dear Reader, on Christmas Day! Nearer and closer to our hearts be the Christmas spirit, which is the spirit of active usefulness, perseverance, cheerful discharge of duty, kindness, and forbearance! It is in the last virtues especially, that we are, or should be, strengthened by the unaccomplished visions of our youth; for, who shall say that they are not our teachers to deal gently even with the invaluable nothings of the earth!

Therefore, as we grow older, let us be more thankful that the circle of our Christmas associations and of the lessons that they bring, expands! Let us welcome every one of them, and summon them to take their places by the Christmas hearth.

Welcome, old aspirations, glittering creatures of an ardent fancy, to your shelter underneath the holly! We know you, and have not outlived you yet. Welcome, old projects and old loves, however fleeting, to your

socks among the steadier lights that burn around us. Welcome, all that was ever real to our hearts; and for the earnestness that made you real, thanks to Heaven! Do we build no Christmas castles in the clouds now? Let our thoughts, fluttering like butterflies among these flowers of children, bear witness! Before this boy, there stretches out a Future, brighter than we ever looked on in our old romantic time, but bright with honor and with truth. Around this little head on which the sunny curls lie heaped, the graces sport, as prettily, as airily, as when there was no scythe within the reach of Time to shear away the curls of our first-love. Upon another girl's face near it—placider but smiling bright—a quiet and contented little face, we see Home fairly written. Shining from the word, as rays shine from a star, we see how, when our graves are old, other hopes than ours are young, other hearts than ours are moved; how other ways are smoothed; how other happiness blooms, ripens, and decays—no, not decays, for other homes and other bairns of children, not yet in being nor for ages yet to be, arise, and bloom and ripen to the end of all!

Welcome, everything! Welcome, alike what has been, and what never was, and what we hope may be, to your shelter underneath the holly, to your places round the Christmas fire, where what is sits open-hearted! In yonder shadow, do we see obtruding furtively upon the blaze, an enemy's face? By Christmas Day we do forgive him! If the injury he has done us may admit of such companionship, let him come here and take his place. If otherwise, unhappily, let him go hence, assured that we will never injure nor accuse him.

On this day, we shut out Nothing!

"Pause," says a low voice. "Nothing? Think!"

"On Christmas Day, we will shut out from our fireside, Nothing."

"Not the shadow of a vast City where the withered leaves are lying deep?" the voice replies. "Not the shadow that darkens the whole globe? Not the shadow of the City of the Dead?"

Not even that. Of all days in the year, we will turn our faces towards that City upon Christmas Day, and from its silent hosts bring those we loved, among us. City of the Dead, in the blessed name wherein we are gathered together at this time, and in the Presence that is here among us according to the promise, we will receive, and not dismiss, thy people who are dear to us!

Yes. We can look upon these children angels that alight, so solemnly, so beautifully, among the living children by the fire, and can bear to think how they departed from us. Entertaining angels unawares, as the Patriarchs did, the playful children are unconscious of their guests; but we can see them—can see a radiant arm around one favorite neck, as if there were a tempting of that child away. Among the celestial figures there is

one, a poor mis-shapen boy on earth, of a glorious beauty now, of whom his dying mother said it grieved her much to leave him here, alone, for so many years as it was likely would elapse before he came to her—being such a little child. But he went quickly, and was laid upon her breast, and in her hand she leads him.

There was a gallant boy, who fell, far away, upon a burning sand beneath a burning sun, and said, "Tell them at home, with my last love, how much I could have wished to kiss them once, but that I died contented and had done my duty!" Or there was another, over whom they read the words, "Therefore we commit his body to the deep!" and so consigned him to the lonely ocean and sailed on. Or there was another who lay down to his rest in the dark shadow of great forests, and, on earth, awoke no more. O shall they not, from sand and sea and forest, be brought home at such a time!

There was a dear girl—almost a woman—never to be one—who made a mourning Christmas in a house of joy, and went her trackless way to the silent City. Do we recollect her, worn out, faintly whispering what could not be heard, and falling into that last sleep for weariness? O look upon her now! O look upon her beauty, her serenity, her changeless youth, her happiness! The daughter of Jairus was recalled to life, to die; but she, more blest, has heard the same voice, saying unto her, "Arise for ever!"

We had a friend who was our friend from early days, with whom we often pictured the changes that were to come upon our lives, and merrily imagined how we would speak, and walk, and think, and talk, when we came to be old. His destined habitation in the City of the Dead received him in his prime. Shall he be shut out from our Christmas remembrance? Would his love have so excluded us? Lost friend, lost child, lost parent, sister, brother, husband, wife, we will not so discard you! You shall hold your cherished places in our Christmas hearts, and by our Christmas fires; and in the season of immortal hope, and on the birthday of immortal mercy, we will shut out Nothing!

The winter sun goes down over town and village; on the sea it makes a rosy path, as if the Sacred tread were fresh upon the water. A few more moments, and it sinks, and night comes on, and lights begin to sparkle in the prospect. On the hill-side beyond the shapelessly-diffused town, and in the quiet keeping of the trees that gird the village-steeple, remembrances are cut in stone, planted in common flowers, growing in grass, entwined with lowly brambles around many a mound of earth. In town and village, there are doors and windows closed against the weather, there are flaming logs heaped high, there are joyful faces, there is healthy mass of voices. Be all ungentleness and harm excluded from the temples of the Household

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS TO A BUNCH OF PEOPLE.

Gods, but be those remembrances admitted with tender encouragement! They are of the time and all its comforting and peaceful remembrances; and of the history that reunited even upon earth the living and the dead; and of the broad beneficence and goodness that too many men have tried to tear to narrow shreds.

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS TO A BUNCH OF PEOPLE.

THE FATHER OF A FAMILY rubs his hands with a genial smile when Christmas comes; and yet he now and then raises one finger to the calculating "organ" of his cranium with rather a thoughtful air, suggestive of certain bills and taxes, which he is resolved shall not weigh upon his mind. Why should they? He will get through his Christmas bills somehow or other, as he has done before. He has no doubt of being able to muster the money to "article" his eldest son to a highly respectable solicitor; he has already laid up a small portion for his eldest daughter, and makes pretty sure of doing as much for the others by the time they are old enough to be married. He has a good business; his wife is a clever manager; they live happily together; the holly-berries smile at him with the well-remembered sparkle of early days; he therefore determines to enjoy the merry season as of old. What if he does see half-a-dozen more grey hairs displaying themselves, as though to remind him that another year has passed, and a certain line or two in his face does look a trifle deeper than when he had last observed it? What have such small matters to do with the real age of a man? A man is as old as he feels, and no more. The fact is, the Father of a Family is as young as he was twenty years ago; so he gives his hair an additional and rather flourishing touch with a comb, puts on a new waistcoat, brushes the collar of his coat, and, looking down with complacency on his boots as he sets his hat lightly upon his head, sallies out upon the landing-place, and, shouts a jaunty inquiry as to where his wife and daughter will be ready to go to church. The boys are gone on before. Meanwhile he stands thrumming a pleased, but impatient, tattoo with his fingers upon the banisters, and inhaling every now and then a savoury whiff of sweet herbs rising up from the kitchen.

THE MOTHER OF A FAMILY has a world of anxious thoughts about her. She likes Christmas, it is, no doubt, a pleasant time; there are many sweet memories and hopes attending it, and altogether it must be considered as happy: but the butcher's bill, she knows, must be heavy—the baker's too—and as for the grocer's, she is almost afraid to think of it. Besides this, there is a new dress-maker's bill, which she has not yet told Mr. Broadback about. But how was all this to be avoided?

As to herself, she could not do with less, nor her eldest daughter, especially on the eve of her marriage—a happy marriage she most devoutly hopes it will be. Then there are the growing girls, all of whose dresses have got so shockingly short, that she could almost wish the follies of Bloomerism had been softened and translated, and entered England under another character—as a Persian, Turkish, or Polish ladies' "fashions," just imported from Paris—so that something economically elegant might have gradually been introduced, inch by inch, as it were, to the great saving of the Mothers of large families of daughters. As for the bonnet-maker, she must wait. It is, unknown what sums have been paid that bonnet-maker in the course of the last six years. Perhaps it would be best not to think any more of these matters just at present. At any rate, Mr. Broadback shall have a good Christmas dinner; she will take care of that; and all their relations and friends who are invited shall be made as happy as possible.

THE ELDEST SON has a mixed feeling about Christmas. He has no very romantic impressions of the study of the Law; but he wishes to begin life, and to take the first step towards making his way in the world; and as he is to be articulated to Mr. Benjamin Sheepskin early in January, he looks upon the intermediate time rather impatiently. At least he would do so, but that his cousin Ellen is to dine with them on Christmas-day, and stay on a visit for a week afterwards, during which there will be round games and forfeits, and he will "go partners" with his cousin, and dance with her, and show her all his law-books, and decoy her under the mistletoe-bough; and so he expects to pass a very merry time before he goes to the office of Mr. Sheepskin.

What Christmas is to THE ELDEST DAUGHTER, we may pretty well infer from the increased brightness in her eyes, the frequent blush that suffuses her soft cheeks, the occasional pensive air suddenly awakening up with a smile, the tender sigh, and the additional pains she takes with her beautiful hair, which is never out of order, and yet she thinks it continually needs to be brushed and smoothed, and set to rights. To her, Christmas evidently comes with a wedding-ring concealed in a wreath of evergreen.

Besides the eldest son, there are "THE BOYS;" and these rollicking young chaps are home for the holidays; and Christmas to them is (weather permitting) an endless succession of sliding and snow-balls, and hoops, and going on the ice; and plum-puddings, and mince-pies, and games at blind-man's-buff, and other romps in the evening, with snap-dragon after supper.

TO THE YOUNGEST CHILD—a little bright-eyed fairy of five years old, in a white and sky-blue frock, purple sash, and red shoes—Christmas is a season of romance. It is a whirl of shining hours, in which there are new toys of mysterious beauty, and dances, and kisses, and cakes of all sorts, and sweet-

meats, and wonderful things made of painted sugar, and all the creatures of the earth, with Noah's Ark in the middle, and brothers and sisters, and playmates, the eldest of whom is not yet "gone eight"—spoken of, like a little black!—and Mamma in a new dress, shining with bracelets, and a chain and things; and dear Auntie with a busy face making something nice to eat; and loud shouting and crowding round a Christmas tree, all of green and gold, with lights; and glittering presents of priceless value dangling from every twig, and hidden in deep green recesses of the boughs. This is the true Fairy-land we have all read so much about!

BUT THE MAIDEN AUNT, she who so continually sits on one side, out of the way, or in the quiet shade of a corner—she who is so continually forgotten, except when some kind assistance is needed—shall we, too, forget her? Far from it. We well know what Christmas is to her. All her life is devoted to amiable disinterested acts of practical aid to all in the house who need it; and the period of Christmas, to her, is the summing up of a year's account of sympathies and kindly offices, of which she herself takes no note beyond the moment, and which have no place in her memory except to cause a sigh of regret when any gentle service has not effected all the good she intended.

What Christmas is to THE OLD HOUSE-KEEPER of a substantial family, more wealthy than the one just described, we must all see at once to be a very serious business indeed;—complicated, and full of grave cares, packages of hope, close-covered preparations, and spicy responsibilities. There she stands, with her tortoise-shell spectacles, and a great bunch of keys dangling over her white apron! No minister of State thinks more of herself (Heaven forgive us!—himself) than this old lady does. Her "linen closet" is a model of neatness and order; her "china closet" is set out with the utmost precision, and not without an eye to effect in the prominent display on the highest shelves of the choice old china-bowls, basins, tea-cups, saucers, and an immensely ancient tea-pot of the ugliest shape imaginable, and covered with very ugly faded paintings, of great value. But most of all is her pride and importance in the house, and in her own self-esteem, displayed when she unlocks and opens the door of her "store-room." No one must enter but the Housekeeper herself. You may stand outside, and lean round the sides of the open door, and peep in—but no more. There, you see large tea-canisters of different sizes—and coffee-canisters—and dark slate-blue paper bags—and polished wooden spice-boxes, tall, and round, and unscrewing in several places—and boxes of raisins, and a fig-drum, and many packets of different sizes, with a large white cone of loaf-sugar standing in the midst—(we think the Youngest Child of this family really *must* be allowed to come in, and look about, but not touch

anything)—and light bundles of dry herbs hanging from nails, and small baskets attached to hooks, and half a German sausage, besides three Bath chaps swinging by short strings from nails on the edge of the top shelf; while, ranged along the shelves, the Child sees a beautiful array of white jam-pots and preserve pots, and brown pickle jars, and wide-necked glass bottles full of deep-coloured cherries, and preserved gooseberries, plums, apricots, and other fruits—with honey-jars, and tamarind-jars; and beneath each shelf, a range of drawers with brass handles, labelled outside with the names of all the nicest, and some of the most mysterious, things, in the eatable world.

What this period of the year is to THE GARDENER, we may easily guess, from great arms-full of mistletoe boughs, of holly-boughs thick with berries, and of branches of laurel which he is continually carrying into the house, or going with as a present to neighbouring houses. And now, see him coming along with a bending back, bearing an entire fir-tree, which gracefully nods its head as he slowly trudges along, and shakes and rustles all its dry brown cones, as if in dumb anticipation of the peals of bells that will shortly be rung! This fir is for the Christmas Tree—the green and simple foundation and superstructure, which is shortly destined to sustain so much brightness and romance, so many glittering presents, and to be the medium of so many sweet feelings, joyous hopes, and tender sense of childhood—in present bright visions around us, and in tender recollections of the past.

As for THE NURSE, there can be no doubt but Christmas is a very anxious time for her. She expects so many of the young folks will make themselves very ill with all this quantity of plum-pudding, and plum-cake, and mince-pies. However, she consoles herself, on the whole, for any extra trouble she may have in pouring out, or mixing and stirring wine-glasses of physic, and trying to conceal powders in honey or red-currant jelly (and then getting them *down*!) by the proud recollection that she had the lady of the house in her arms when a child; and this consciousness makes her feel of the highest importance in the family.

BUT THE DOCTOR—the medical attendant of the family—there are no mixed feelings or misgivings in his mind. He hears of all the preparations—all the nice things—and shakes his head gravely at the lady of the house; but the instant he is outside the door, he hurries homeward, rubbing his knuckles. *He knows!*

The black coat of THE VICAR has a richer and more prominent tone of black, as he walks across the broad snow of his seven-acre field, towards the stile that leads into the lane that runs to the vestry-door of the church. The snow-covered hedges, with frosted twigs at top, nod and glisten to him as he moves briskly onward, pointing his Church-and-stately black toe along the narrow path, beside the deep

cart-rut, with its rough and jagged ridges. Christmas to him is a series of dinners, and "offerings," and good things, and compliments, and wedding fees, and burial fees, and christening fees, and charity sermons, exhorting the rich to remember the poor, and exhorting the poor to be meek and contented, and trust to Providence. Meantime, THE CURATE goes to tea-parties, and has a great deal to do in the details of Church business affairs, as the vestries are often very troublesome; and has much to do in visiting the sick, and administering religious consolation, and riding on horseback to do double-duty—morning service, here—afternoon, there—evening service, here again, or somewhere else. This is the ordinary, regular, hard-working, useful Curate; but if he be a spruce young Puseyite Curate, in a black silk sacerdotal dress-waistcoat, with a narrow, stiff white neck-tie, and a black superfine frock-coat, cut to the quick—then, he very often rivals the Vicar in his dinner-parties, and gives him the "go by" in evening-parties, where he clean carries off most of the young ladies for a little intense talk of divine things, in one corner of the room.

If Christmas be a great fact to THE BEADLE, the Beadle seems a greater fact to Christmas. New broad-cloth—new scarlet and gold—new gold-laced cocked hat, of old Lord Mayor fashion—new gold-headed cane—no wonder that all the little charity boys eye his inflated presence with additional awe! No wonder that it is inflated for he is swollen with the substantial comforts derived from all the great kitchens in the neighbourhood. There is a roasted ox in his mind. He can never forget the year when one was roasted whole upon the ice, and he present, and allowed to take his turn with the basting-ladle. It was the epic event of his life.

The Beadle is generally able to frown the charity boys into awe and silence; assisting, the said frown, every now and then, with a few cuts of a long yellow twining cane, during service; whereby, amidst the sonorous tones of the preacher, there often breaks out a squealing cry from the hollow and remote aisles, or distant rows of heads in the organ loft, to the great injury of the eloquence of the pastor, and the gravity of the junior portion of his congregation.

But though this parish Terror of the Poor has portentous frowns for most of those under his dominion, he knows how to patronise with a smile, and his rubicund beams, at all seasons of festival, and more especially at Christmas, fall encouragingly upon all the cooks of the best houses round about. Perhaps, upon the chief Bell-ringer—perhaps, we may say, upon all the bell-ringers—and now and then upon the Sexton, with whom he does a little private business, in the way of gratuities from mourning relatives who come to visit graves. But as for the Pew-opener, envy of her gains at Christmas, and

her obduracy in concealing their existence, renders him a foe to her existence, and haughtily unconscious of her presence as often as he can affect not to see her. There was once upon a time, a good Beadle, who married a Pew-opener—but it was a long while ago—so long, that it is thought to have been in the good old—&c.

Christmas is not what it was to the POSTMAN. The Government has interfered sadly with his collection of "boxes" from house to house; so that now he only receives gratefully a shilling, here and there, in streets where formerly he had but to announce, after a loud double-rap, that "the Postman has called for his Christmas-box!" and down came the shilling, almost as a lawful right. He looks melancholy as he sits on the bench outside a country public-house; and when the Landlord inquires the cause, he hints at the altered times. But he does not get much sympathy in this quarter; for THE PUBLICAN feels that the alteration is considerably in his favour. He has had a new beer-machine for his bar, all beautiful with inlaid brass and ivory; he has added a wing to his house, and he feels a proud consciousness that, if all his town relations live in "palaces," he is quite as important to the sinners, his subjects, in the country.

To the CATTLE-DROVER this is a season of arduous business, by day and by night, urging his fatigued and often refractory beasts along the dark roads; and when they enter among the many lights and glare of London, as they sometimes do in the evening, what Christmas is to the poor cattle, as well as the men, may be conjectured; and all things considered, one may fairly say the oxen have the worst of it. THE SHEPHERD who is driving a flock of sheep to the Christmas market, seldom sees much amusement by the way; events with him are rare; but the journey of the PIG-DROVERS up to town is always a "chequered" history. One pig or another is sure to be of an original turn of mind, and several are sure to follow his example for a little while, and then branch off into a line of conduct suited exclusively to their own individuality: under cart-wheels, dodging round pumps, hiding noses behind tree-trunks in the country, and behind theatrical boards in the front of town shops; rushing into hedges, and round haystacks, as the drove moves unwillingly along lanes and roads; and into wine-cellar, and round lamp-posts, and up "all manner of streets" in London. THE TURKEY-DROVER has also a very busy time of it just now; and the GOOSE-DROVER far more. The greater difficulty attending the flocks of geese is not because they are so much more numerous than the turkeys, as on account of the perverse, irritable, and stupid conditions of mind which alternate with the goose. It is to be remembered that the warlike turkey-cock (so aptly called in Scotland the *bubblie-jock*) and the mature fierce-necked, wing-threatening, universally-assaulting gander, being preserved by their toughness, are not present in

these festive processions. We speak only of the young and middle-aged turkey and goose; but while we give the degree of difficulty in their safe-conduct very much to the side of the latter, we are almost disposed to agree with the eminent poet, who has sung its praises in another sense, finely combining with that praise a kind of hint at a moral justification for its death:

"Of all the fowls that stock the farm,
The Goose must be preferred;
There is so much of nutriment
In that weak-minded bird."

Christmas to THE BUTCHER is nothing less than a bazaar of fine meat, displayed with all the elegancies (they are not numerous) of which his craft is susceptible. With a smiling countenance and ruddy cheek he walks backwards and forwards, through his shop all hung with choice specimens of last year's "grass"—the sun gleaming across them by day, and the gas shining at night upon the polished surfaces, and delicate white fat, and sparkling amidst the branches of holly, stuck about in all directions. He very much approves of the vigorous way in which one of his men continues to bawl in a sharp quick tone "now then, t' buy! t' buy!" when the most unlikely people, or when no people at all, are passing. It all looks like business and bustle.

THE BAKER stands amidst his walls of loaves, built up, shelf upon shelf,—with other shelves packed close with quarter and half-quarter paper-bags of flour,—and he glances from the topmost tier down to the flour-whitened trap-door in one corner of his shop-floor, wherefrom appears an ascending tray, heaped up with long French rolls, cottage-loaves, twists, rusks, and hot-spiced gingerbread-nuts. This loaded tray continues to rise upon a man's head, which is gradually followed by his body, and the whole structure approaching the counter is speedily unloaded. In less than half an hour, all that was thus brought from below has disappeared; the walls of loaves have diminished in great gaps; more loaves come smoking in, to supply their places, and more trays of rolls, twists, gingerbread-nuts, and fancy bread, with piles of biscuits, ascend through the trap-door. The Baker has a nice-looking daughter (as most bakers in England have), and she now comes in smiling, and displaying a row of pearly teeth, and assists in taking money. They both agree that although summer has its advantages, there is no time of the year so pleasant as Christmas.

THE GROCER is one of the most flourishing men in all the world at this season. His shop is a small and over-crowded epitome of the produce of the East. He is evidently in constant correspondence with China, has the most "friendly relations" in India, is on familiar terms with the Spice Islands, has confidential friends in Egypt, Barbary, and

on "Candy's shore;" while, as to Jamaica, and other West India Islands, he has a box, a cask, or a case, by every post, to say nothing of Arabia, France, Greece, Spain, Italy, and, in fine, all the trading ports of the Mediterranean Sea. To the Grocer we may fairly say that Christmas is a general shaking by the hand, with fingers extremely sticky, of foreign relations and agents in every country, whence something good to eat, in the shape of dried fruits, spices, teas, coffees, sugars, preserves and condiments, are possible to be procured. If he has a newly-arrived Chinese picture, inlaid caddy, monster igol, or tea-pot, now is his time to make a feature of it in his window!

THE GREEN-GROCER is a genuine Englishman; he cannot boast of the foreign commodities of the tea-and-sugar mountebank over the way. He has no wish to do it. He deals entirely in home produce. All that he sells, is the natural result of the cultivation of the soil of his native country: from celery, beetroot, sea-kale, and cabbage-sprouts, to Jerusalem artichokes and sage and onions. All of English growth! He could very easily hollow out a turnip; cut eyes, nose, and mouth in it; stick a bit of candle inside; and then set it up for a "show," all among the endive and parsley, in the middle of his window on Christmas Eve; but he scorns all such attempts to attract public attention. It may be very well for the Grocer over the way; but that sort of thing won't do for a man who deals in natural greens!

Christmas, to THE PASTRYCOOK, is the season when the human mind, if well regulated, is chiefly occupied in the contemplation of mince-pies. Also in eating them, and decidedly in paying for them. But a very large consumption of holiday plum-cakes is not the less expected by the patriotic pastrycook. There is another yet greater event in his mind, though he does not break ground with this till after Christmas Day; and that is, the advance of Twelfth Night. While, therefore, he expects the public to be solely occupied with mince-pies and other seasonable matters, he is secretly at work in the production of a full set (we forget how many he told us made a set) of the richest and most elaborately decorated and "dramatised" Twelfth Cakes which the juvenile world of England has ever yet beheld. The man's half crazy. His wife says he gets no sleep with thinking of his cakes. The other night he started up in bed, and cried out "Sugar-frost and whitening!" till his night-cap stood on end. Though why on earth—as the good lady remarked, on second thoughts, "he should talk of whitening, she couldn't form the remotest idea in life!"

No doubt Christmas is the season which calls forth the most unmitigated hatred of poachers in the breast of the patriotic POULTERER. He says they are pests of society, and the wickedest men going. There is no excuse for strong fellows leading an idle life, as most of the poachers do. It is worse than

idle; he calls it thievish and villainous. He would be the last man in all England to encourage such doings. On the contrary, he would show them no mercy. Every man-jack of them that could be caught, he would send for two or three days to hard work on Primrose Hill. After this they would become better and wiser men; more industrious, more cautious; not so full of talk in beer-houses; more punctual and reliable; altogether more useful members of society. But as for his show of hares and other game, this Christmas, he will warrant every one, as having been honestly come by, and duly paid for, and not too "high" for immediate eating. What a capital show he makes this year! One hundred and twenty long-legs (as he familiarly calls the hares), three hundred rabbits, fifty brace of pheasants, ninety brace of "birds," twenty brace of woodcocks, thirty brace of snipe, a hundred and fifty brace of pigeons, two hundred turkeys, three hundred geese, with wild ducks, tame ducks, and barn-door fowls innumerable! The inside of his shop is full in every corner; from countless hooks, hang rows of turkeys by the necks, and long double chains of sausages and rows of ducks, and rows of fowls, all dangling by the necks, too, and in full feather; while his shelves present compact arrays of fowls plucked and trussed, and powdered, and blown up in the breast with a blow-pipe: their livers and gizzards tucked neatly, like opera-hats, under their pinions. Rows of them, also, like small batteries, front the street. The outside of his house, even up to the second floor window, is hung with hares, rabbits, pheasants, wild-ducks, turkeys, and partridges.

But, if Christmas is a season of greatness to some, of hilarity to many, of importance to all, it is pre-eminently a season of equal anxiety and splendour to THE COOK. Her long kitchen-range is a perfect bonfire, from morning to night, while the various bright utensils which are placed upon the chimney-piece and on the walls at both sides of it, are profusely interspersed with twigs and boughs of holly. "Now, do get out of my way, all of you!—don't you see how much I have got on my mind with this Christmas dinner! Where's Jane?—Jane Stokes!—oh, the plague of kitchen-maids! they're always out of the way, at the moment they're most wanted. Barbara, are the vegetables washed?" "Not yet, Cook!" It's always "not yet" with them scullery-girls! Oh, how the Cook wishes there were no need for any help from any soul alive, if so be as she could but do everything herself, which is that is where it is and all about it! But the Christmas dinner don't get spoiled; by no means—everything turns out excellently, and compliments, like full-blown cabbage-roses, are showered upon Cook from the visitors of the hospitable board. They are brought to her, as she sits wiping her forehead, and all her face and throat, in a cool and remote corner. Her heart expands; she loves

all mankind; and she retires to rest, after a small glass of cordial, at peace with herself and all the world.

AN IDYL FOR CHRISTMAS IN-DOORS.

"The houses were decked with evergreens in December that the Sylvan Spirits might repair to them, and remain untripped with frost and cold winds, until a milder season had renewed the foliage of their abodes."—*BRAND'S Popular Antiquities.*

SCENE:—A room by twilight, on Christmas Eve: the fire burning with a sleepy red. Branches of Holly, Laurel and Mistletoe, hanging on the walls. A Sylvan Spirit sitting in each plant.

SPIRIT OF THE HOLLY.

THE icy streams are black and slow;
The icy wind goes sighing, sighing;
And far around, and deep below,
The great, broad, blank, unpestered snow
On the idle earth is lying;
And the birds in the air are dying.
Just now, ere the day-beams fled,
Out of doors I thrust my head,
And saw the livid western light
Sprink up, like an eye-bewitch'd,
At the staring of the Night.
The bare branches writhed and twitch'd
And the holly-bushes old
Chattered among themselves for cold,
And scraped their leaves 'gainst one another,
And nestled close, like child with mother.
Ay, not all the globy fire
Of their berries, scarlet hot,
Which the mortals all admire,
Could their bodies warm a jot:
They look'd heavy and sad, God wot!
The nested birds sat close together,
'Plaining of the mournful weather;
And the tough and tangled hedges,
Near and distant, mark'd the track
Of the roadway, and the edges
Of the fields, with lines of black.
Soon I skip'd, all shivering, back.
Here, beneath the sheltering eaves
Of the ceiling, dry and warm,
Air, like breath of Summer, weaves
In between my glossy leaves,
Doing me no harm:
And the CHRISTMAS spirit benign
Sparkles in my heart like wine.

SPIRIT OF THE LAUREL.

Gone is the Summer's warmth and light;
Gone are the rich, red Autumn days;
And Winter old, and Winter white,
Sits moodily in the open ways.
Like a great dumb marble statue,
'Bideth he upon the wold;
And his grey eyes, staring at you,
Make you also dumb with cold.
And the woods grow lean and swart,
In the vexings of the North;
Fill'd with sighings and lamentations
Of the winged forest nations,
Who, beneath their shatter'd bowers,
Wonder at the gusty showers,
And the length of the dark hours.
But the in-door year is bright
With the flush of CHRISTMAS light;
And the breath of that glad comer
Kindles with a second Summer,

In the which, blithe hearts are seen
Bursting into tenfold green,
Till they sit embower'd, and sing
Under their own blossoming.
Therefore we, the woodland fairies,
Hold at present with the Larks,
Leaving Winter for the noon
Of this glowing household June;
Whereunto an added splendour
Preternatural we render,
Quickening, as with inward soul,
The intensely-burning coal.

SPIRIT OF THE MISTLETOE.

Behind the night young morn is sleeping,
And new hope underlies old weeping.
So, though all the woods are stark,
And the heavens are drowsy-dark,
Earth, within her shadows dun,
Swings about the golden sun,
Firm and steadily,
True and readily,
Strong in her pulses, every one.
In a deadly sleep she seems;
But her heart is full of dreams—
Full of dreaming and of vision,
Subtle, typical, Elysian,
Out of which, in time, shall rise
All the New Year's verities.
And the spirit within her veins
Laughs and leaps like April rains;
Warming with electric breath
The dark coldness underneath,
Where, close shut from human seeing,
Lie the secret nests of being.
And the embryo phantoms,—hosts
Of pale ante-natal ghosts,—
Bloodless germs of flowers and leaves,
From which the lady Spring receives,
When they wake to life, the flush
Of her many-colour'd blush.
Meanwhile, every shade of sadness
Melts away in CHRISTMAS gladness.
Green old CHRISTMAS! he doth bring
With him his peculiar Spring;—
Newly-germinating kindness,
Mutual help in human blindness,
Closing of old wounds, fresh greetings,
Souls a-flow at genial meetings,
Hovering fancies, loving laughter,
And the grave thoughts coming after;
All the lightness, brightness, dancing,
Interflowing, rainbow glancing,
Awful sweetness, wing'd with pleasure,
Of a heart that has no measure.

ALL.

Therefore will we here remain
Till the woods are green again,
And the sun makes golden glooms
In the forest's pillar'd rooms.
Here we can abide together
Through the fire-lit CHRISTMAS weather,
And, though none may us desery,
Touch with sense of mystery
The hot feasting and loud joy,
Which, uncurb'd, themselves destroy,
And die childless: for true mirth,
Like the Heaven-embellish'd earth,
Should be large and full—yet bound
By the haunted depths all round.

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS IN COUNTRY PLACES.

If we want to see the good old Christmas—the traditional Christmas—of old England, we must look for it in the country. There are lasting reasons why the keeping of Christmas cannot change in the country as it may in towns. The seasons themselves ordain the festival. The close of the year is an interval of leisure in agricultural regions; the only interval of complete leisure in the year; and all influences and opportunities concur to make it a season of holiday and festivity. If the weather is what it ought to be at that time, the autumn crops are in the ground; and the springing wheat is safely covered up with snow. Everything is done for the soil that can be done at present; and as for the clearing and trimming and repairing, all that can be looked to in the after part of the winter; and the planting is safe if done before Candlemas. The plashing of hedges, and cleaning of ditches, and trimming of lanes, and mending of roads, can be got through between Twelfth Night and the early spring ploughing; and a fortnight may well be given to jollity, and complete change.

Such a holiday requires a good deal of preparation: so Christmas is, in this way also, a more weighty affair in the rural districts than elsewhere. The strong beer must be brewed. The pigs must be killed weeks before; the lard is wanted; the bacon has to be cured; the hams will be in request; and, if brawn is sent to the towns, it must be ready before the children come home for the holidays. Then, there is the fattening of the turkeys and geese to be attended to; a score or two of them to be sent to London, and perhaps half-a-dozen to be enjoyed at home. When the gentleman, or the farmer, or the country shop-keeper, goes to the great town for his happy boys and girls, he has a good deal of shopping to do. Besides carrying a note to the haberdasher, and ordering coffee, tea, dried fruit, and spices, he must remember not to forget the packs of cards that will be wanted for loo and whist. Perhaps he carries a secret order for fiddlestrings from a neighbour who is practising his part in good time.

There is one order of persons in the country to whom the month of December is anything but a holiday season—the cooks. Don't tell us of town-cooks in the same breath! It is really overpowering to the mind to think what the country cooks have to attend to. The goose-pie, alone, is an achievement to be complacent about; even the most ordinary goose-pie; still more, a superior one, with a whole goose in the middle, and another cut up and laid round; with a fowl or two, and a pheasant or two, and a few larks put into odd corners; and the top, all shiny with white of egg, figured over with leaves of pastry, and tendrils and crinkle-crinkles, with a bunch of the more delicate bird feet standing

up in the middle. The oven is the cook's child and slave; the great concern of her life, at this season. She pets it, she humours it, she scolds it, and she works it without rest. Before daylight she is at it—baking her oat bread; that bread which requires such perfect behaviour on the part of the oven! Long lines of oat-cakes hang overhead, to grow crisp before breakfast; and these are to be put away when crisp, to make room for others; for she can hardly make too much. After breakfast, and all day, she is making and baking meat-pies, mince-pies, sausage-rolls, fruit-pies, and cakes of all shapes, sizes, and colours. And at night, when she can scarcely stand for fatigue, she “banks” the oven fire, and puts in the great jar of stock for the soups that the drawing may go on, from all sorts of savoury odds and ends, while everything but the drowsy fire is asleep. She wishes the dear little lasses would not come messing and fussing about, making gingerbread and cheesecakes. She would rather do it herself, than have them in her way. But she has not the heart to tell them so. On the contrary, she gives them ginger, and cuts the citron-peel bountifully for them; hoping, the while, that the weather will be fine enough for them to go into the woods with their brothers for holly and ivy. Meantime, the dairy-woman says, (what she declares every Christmas,) that she never saw such a demand for cream and butter; and that, before Twelfth Night, there will be none. And how, at that season, can she supply eggs by scores, as she is expected to do? The gingerbread baked, the rosiest apples picked out from their straw in the apple-closet, the cats, and dogs, and canary birds, played with and fed, the little lasses run out to see what the boys are about.

The woodmen want something else than green to dress the house with. They are looking for the thickest, and hardest, and knottiest block of wood they can find, that will go into the kitchen chimney. A gnarled stump of elm will serve their purpose best; and they trim it into a size to send home. They fancy that their holiday is to last as long as this fog remains; and they are satisfied that it will be uncommonly difficult to burn up this one. This done, one of them proceeds with the boys and girls to the copses where the hollies are thickest; and by carrying his bill-hook, he saves a vast deal of destruction by rending and tearing. The poor little birds, which make the hollies so many aviaries in winter, coming to feed on the berries, and to pop in among the shining leaves for shelter, are sadly scared, and out they flit on all sides, and away to the great oak, where nobody will follow them. For, alas! there is no real mistletoe now. There is to be something so called hung from the middle of the kitchen ceiling, that the lads and lasses may snatch kisses and have their fun; but it will have no white berries, and no Druidical dignity about

it. It will be merely a bush of evergreen, called by some a mistletoe, and by others the Bob, which is supposed to be a corruption of “bough.” When all the party have got their fagots tied up, and strung over their shoulders, and button-holes, hats, and bouquets stuck with sprigs, and gay with berries, it is time they were going home; for there is a vast deal to be done this Christmas Eve, and the sunshine is already between the hills, in soft yellow gushes; and not on them.

A vast deal there is to be done; and especially if there is any village near. First, there is to dress the house with green; and then to go and help to adorn the church. The Bob must not be hung up till to-morrow; but every door has a branch over it; and the leads of the latticed windows are stuck with sprigs; and every picture-frame, and looking-glass, and candlestick is garnished. Any “scraps” (very young children) who are too small to help, pick up scattered holly-leaves, and, being not allowed to go upon the rug, beg somebody to throw them into the fire; whence ensues a series of cracklings, and sputtering blazes, and lighting up of wide-open eyes. In the midst of this—hark! is not that the church bell? The boys go out to listen, and report that it is so;—the “Christmas deal” (or dole) is about to begin; so, off go all who are able, up to the church.

It is very cold there, and dim, and dreary, in spite of the candles, and the kindness, and other good things that are collected there. By the time the bell has ceased to clang, there are a few gentlemen there, and a number of widows, and aged men, and orphan children. There are piles of blankets; and bits of paper, which are orders for coals. One gentleman has sent a bag of silver money; and another, two or three sheep, cut up ready for cooking; and another, a great pile of loaves. The boys run and bring down a ladder to dress the pillars; and scuffle in the galleries; and venture into the pulpit, under pretence of dressing the church. When the dole is done and the poor people gone, the doors are closed; and, if the boys remain, they must be quiet; for the organist and the singers are going to rehearse the anthem that is to be sung to-morrow. If the boys are not quiet, they are turned out.

There is plenty of bustle in the village. The magistrates are in the long room of the inn, settling justice business. The inn looks as if it were illuminated. The waiters are seen to glide across the hall; and on the steps are the old constable, and the new rural policeman, and the tax-collector, and the postman. It is so cold that something steaming hot will soon be brought for them, to drink; and the poor postman will be taken on his weak side. Christmas is a trying season to him, with his weak head, and his popularity, and his Christmas-boxes, and his constant liability to be reported. Cold as it is, there are women fitting about.

going to or from the grocer's shop, and all bringing away the same things. The grocers give away, this night, to their regular customers, a good mould candle each, and a nutmeg. This is because the women must be up by candle-light to-morrow, to make something that is to be spiced with nutmeg. So a good number of women pass by with a candle and a nutmeg; and some, with a bottle or pitcher, come up the steps, and go to the bar for some rum. But the clock strikes supper-time, and away go the boys home.

Somebody wonders at supper whether the true oval mince-pie is really meant to be in the form of a certain manger; and its contents to signify the gifts, various and rich, brought by the Magi to that manger. And while the little ones are staring at this news, somebody else observes that it was a pretty idea of the old pagans, in our island, of dressing up their houses with evergreens, that there might be a warm retreat for the spirits of the woods in times of frost and bitter winter storms. Some child peeps timidly up at the biggest branch in the room, and fancies what it would be to see some sprite sitting under a leaf, or dancing along a spray. When supper is done, and the youngest are gone to bed, having been told not to be surprised if they should hear the stars singing in the night, the rest of the party turn to the fire, and begin to roast their chestnuts in the shovel, and to heat the elderwine in the old-fashioned saucepan, silvered inside. One absent boy, staring at the fire, starts when his father offers him a chestnut for his thoughts. He hesitates, but his curiosity is vivid, and he braves all the consequences of saying what he is thinking about. He wonders whether he might, just for once,—just for this once—go to the stalls when midnight has struck, and see whether the oxen are kneeling. He has heard, and perhaps read, that the oxen kneeled, on the first Christmas-day, and kept the manger warm with their breath; and that all oxen still kneel in their stalls when Christmas-day comes in. Father and mother exchange a quick glance of agreement to take this seriously; and they explain that there is now so much uncertainty, since the New Style of reckoning the days of the year was introduced, that the oxen cannot be depended on; and it is not worth while to be out of bed at midnight for the chance. Some say the oxen kneel punctually when Old Christmas comes in; and if so they will not do it to-night.

This is not the quietest night of the year; even if nobody visits the oxen. Soon after all are settled to sleep, sounds arise which thrill through some who are half-awakened by them, and then, remembering something about the stars singing, the children rouse themselves, and lie, with open eyes and ears, feeling that Christmas morning has come. They must soon, one would think, give up the

star theory; for the music is only two fiddles, or a fiddle and clarinet; or, possibly, a fiddle and drum, with a voice or two, which can hardly be likened to that of the spheres. The voices sing, "While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night;" and then—marvellously enough—single out this family of all the families on the earth, to bless with the good wishes of the season. They certainly are wishing to master and mistress and all the young ladies and gentlemen, "good morning," and "a merry Christmas and a happy New Year." Before this celestial mystery is solved, and before the distant twang of the fiddle is quite out of hearing, the celestial mystery of sleep enwraps the other, and lays it to rest until the morrow. The boys—the elder ones—meant to keep awake; first, for the Waits, and afterwards to determine for themselves whether the cock crows all night on Christmas Eve, to keep all hurtful things from walking the earth. When the Waits are gone, they just remember that any night, between this and Old Christmas, will do for the cock, which is said to defy evil spirits in this manner for the whole of that season. Which the boys are very glad to remember; for they are excessively sleepy; so off they go into the land of dreams.

It is now past two; and at three the maids must be up. Christmas morning is the one, of all the year, when, in the North of England especially, families make a point of meeting, and it must be at the breakfast table. In every house, far and near, where there is fuel and flour, and a few pence to buy currants, there are cakes making, which everybody must eat of; cakes of pastry, with currants between the layers. The grocer has given the nutmeg; and those who can afford it, add rum, and other dainties. The ladies are up betimes, to set out the best candlesticks, to garnish the table, to make the coffee, and to prepare a welcome for all who claim a seat. The infant in arms must be there, as seven o'clock strikes. Any married brother or sister, living within reach, must be there, with the whole family train. Long before sunrise, there they sit, in the glow of the fire and the glitter of candles, chatting and laughing, and exchanging good wishes.

In due time, the church-bell calls the flock of worshippers from over hill, and down dale, and along commons, and across fields: and presently they are seen coming, all in their best,—the majority probably saying the same thing,—that, somehow, it seems always to be fine on Christmas-day. Then, one may reckon up the exceptions he remembers; and another may tell of different sorts of fine weather that he has known; how, on one occasion, his daughter gathered thirty-four sorts of flowers in their own garden on Christmas-day; and the rose-bushes had not lost their leaves on Twelfth Day; and then the wise will agree how much they prefer a good seasonable frost and sheeted snow like this, to April weather in December.

Service over, the bell silent, and the sexton turning the key in the lock, off run the young men, out of reach of remonstrance, to shoot, until dinner at least,—more probably until the light fails. They shoot almost any thing that comes across them, but especially little birds,—chaffinches, blackbirds, thrushes,—any winged creature distressed by the cold, or betrayed by the smooth and cruel snow. The little children at home are doing better than their elder brothers. They are putting out crumbs of bread for the robins, and feeling sorry and surprised that robins prefer bread to plum-pudding. They would have given the robins some of their own pudding, if they had but liked it.

In every house, there is dinner to-day,—of one sort or another,—except where the closed shutter shows that the folk are out to dinner. The commonest dinner in the poorer houses—in some parts of the country—is a curious sort of mutton pie. The meat is cut off a loin of mutton, and reduced to mouthfuls, and then strewed over with currants or raisins and spice, and the whole covered in with a stout crust. In some places, the dinner is baked meat and potatoes: in too many cottages, there is nothing better than a morsel of bacon to flavour the bread or potatoes. But it may be safely said that there is more and better dining in England on Christmas-day than on any other day of the year.

In the houses of gentry and farmers, the dinner and dessert are a long affair, and soon followed by tea, that the sports may begin. Everybody knows what these sports are, in parlour, hall, and kitchen:—singing, dancing, cards, blind-man's buff, and other such games; forfeits, ghost-story telling, snap-dragon;—these, with a bountiful supper interposed, lasting till midnight. In scattered houses, among the wilds, card-playing goes on briskly. Wherever there are Wesleyans enough to form a congregation, they are collected at a tea-drinking in their chapel; and they spend the evening in singing hymns. Where there are Germans settled, or any leading family which has been in Germany, there is a Christmas-tree lighted up somewhere. Those Christmas-trees are as prolific as the inexhaustible cedars of Lebanon. Wherever one strikes root, a great number is sure to spring up under its shelter.

However spent, the evening comes to an end. The hymns in the chapel, and the carols in the kitchen, and the piano in the parlour are all hushed. The ghosts have glided by into the night. The forfeits are redeemed. The blind-man has recovered his sight, and lost it again in sleep. The dust of the dancers has subsided. The fires are nearly out, and the candles quite so. The reflection that the great day is over, would have been too much for some little hearts, sighing before they slept, but for the thought that to-morrow is Boxing-day; and that Twelfth Night is yet to come.

But, first, will come New Year's Eve, with

its singular inconvenience (in some districts) of nothing whatever being carried out of the house for twenty-four hours, lest, in throwing away anything, you should be throwing away some luck for the next year. Not a potato-paring, nor a drop of soap-suds or cabbage-water, not a cinder, nor a pinch of dust, must be removed till New Year's morning. In these places, there is one person who must be stirring early—the darkest man in the neighbourhood. It is a serious thing there to have a swarthy complexion and black hair; for the owner cannot refuse to his acquaintance the good luck of his being the first to enter their houses on New Year's day. If he is poor, or his time is precious, he is regularly paid for his visit. He comes at day-break, with something in his hand, if it is only an orange or an egg, or a bit of ribbon, or a twopenny picture. He can't stay a minute,—he has so many to visit; but he leaves peace of mind behind him. His friends begin the year with the advantage of having seen a dark man enter their house the first in the New Year.

Such, in its general features, is Christmas, throughout the rural districts of Old England. Here, the revellers may be living in the midst of pastoral levels, all sheeted with snow; there, in deep lanes, or round a village green, with ploughed slopes rising on either hand: here, on the spurs of mountains, with glittering icicles hanging from the grey precipices above them, and the accustomed waterfall bound in silence by the frost beside their doors; and there again, they may be within hearing of the wintry surge, booming along the rocky shore; but the revelry is of much the same character everywhere. There may be one old superstition in one place, and another in another; but that which is no superstition is everywhere;—the hospitality, the mirth, the social glow which spreads from heart to heart, which thaws the pride and the purse-strings, and brightens the eyes and affections.

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS IN THE COMPANY OF JOHN DOE.

I HAVE kept (amongst a store of jovial, genial, heart-stirring returns of the season) some very dismal Christmases. I have kept Christmas in Constantinople, at a horrible Pera hotel, where I attempted the manufacture of a plum-pudding from the macaroni-soup they served me for dinner, mingled with some Zante currants, and a box of figs I had brought from Smyrna; and where I sat, until very late at night, endeavouring to persuade myself that it was cold and "Christmassy" (though it wasn't), drinking Levant wine, and listening to the howling of the dogs outside, mingled with the clank of a portable fire-engine, which some soldiers were carrying to one of those extensive conflagrations which never happen

in Constantinople oftener than three times a day. I have kept Christmas on board a Boulogne packet, in company with a basin, several despair-stricken females, and a damp steward; who, to all our inquiries whether we should be "in soon," had the one unvarying answer of "pretty near" to give. I have kept Christmas, when a boy, at a French boarding-school, where they gave me nothing out lentils and *bouilli* for dinner, on the auspicious day itself. I have kept Christmas by the bedside of a sick friend, and wished him the compliments of the season in his physic-bottles (had they contained another six months' life, poor soul!) I have kept Christmas at rich men's tables, where I have been uncomfortable; and once in a cobbler's shop, where I was excessively convivial. I have spent one Christmas in prison. Start not, urbane reader! I was not sent there for larceny, nor for misdemeanor; but for debt.

It was Christmas-eve; and I—my name is Prupper—was taking my walks abroad. I walked through the crowded Strand, elate, hilarious, benignant, for the feast was prepared, and the guests were bidden. Such a turkey I had ordered! Not the prize one with the ribbons—I mistrusted that; but a plump, tender, white-breasted bird, a king of turkeys. It was to be boiled with oyster-sauce; and the rest of the Christmas dinner was to consist of that noble sirloin of roast beef, and that immortal cod's head and shoulders! I had bought the materials for the pudding too, some half-hour previously: the plums and the currants, the citron and the allspice, the flour and the eggs. I was happy.

Onward, by the bright grocer's shops, thronged with pudding-purchasers! Onward, by the bookseller's, though lingering, it may be, for a moment, by the gorgeous Christmas books, with their bright binding, and brighter pictures. Onward, by the pastry cook's! Onward, elate, hilarious, and benignant, until, just as I stopped by a poulterer's shop, to admire the finest capon that ever London or Christmas saw, a hand was laid on my shoulder!

"Before our sovereign lady the Queen"—"by the grace of God, greeting"—"that you take the body of Thomas Prupper, and him safely keep"—"and for so doing, this shall be your warrant."

These dread and significant words swam before my dazzled eyelids, dancing maniac horripiles on a parchment slip of paper. I was to keep Christmas in no other company than that of the once celebrated fictitious personage, supposed to be the familiar of all persons similarly situated—JOHN DOE.

I remembered with horror, that some fortnight previously, a lawyer's clerk deposited on my shoulder a slip of paper, which he stated to be the copy of a writ, and in which her Majesty the Queen (mixed up for the nonce with John Lord Campbell) was pleased

to command me to enter an appearance somewhere, by such a day, in order to answer the plaint of somebody, who said I owed him some money. Now, an appearance had not been entered, and judgment had gone by default, and execution had been obtained against me. The Sheriff of Middlesex (who is popularly, though erroneously, supposed to be incessantly running up and down in his bailiwick) had had a writ of *fi. facias*, vulgarly termed a *fi. fa.* against my goods; but hearing, or satisfying himself by adroit espionage, that I had no goods, he had made a return of *nulla bona*. Then had he invoked the aid of a more subtle and potential instrument, likewise on parchment, called a *capias ad satisfaciendum*, abbreviated in legal parlance into *ca. sa.*, against my body. This writ he had confided to Aminadab, his man; and Aminadab, running, as he was in duty bound to do, up and down in his section of the bailiwick, had come across me, and had made me the captive of his bow and spear. He called it, less metaphorically, "nabbing me."

Mr. Aminadab, (tall, aquiline-nosed, oleaginous, somewhat dirty; clad in a green Newmarket coat, a crimson velvet waistcoat, a purple satin neckcloth with gold flowers, two watch-guards, and four diamond rings.)—Mr. Aminadab proposed that "something should be done." Would I go to Whitecross-street at once? or to Blowman's, in Cursitor-street? or would I just step into Peele's Coffee-house for a moment? Mr. Aminadab was perfectly polite; and indefinitely suggestive.

The capture had been made in Fleet Street; so we stepped into Peele's, and while Mr. Aminadab sipped the pint of wine which he had obligingly suggested, I should order, I began to look my position in the face. Execution taken out for forty-five pounds nine and ninepence. *Cu sa.*, a guinea; *fi. fa.*, a guinea; capture, a guinea; those were all the costs as yet. Now, some days after I was served with the writ, I had paid the plaintiff's lawyer, on account, thirty pounds. In the innocence of my heart, I imagined that, by the County Court Act, I could not be arrested for the balance, it being under twenty pounds. Mr. Aminadab laughed with contemptuous pity.

"We do n't do business that way," said he; "we goes in for the whole lot, and then you pleads your set-off, you know."

The long and the short of the matter was, that I had eighteen pounds, twelve shillings, and nine pence, to pay; before my friend in the purple neckcloth would relinquish his grasp; and that, to satisfy the demand, I had exactly the sum of two pounds two and a half-penny, and a gold watch, on which a relation of mine would probably advance four pounds more. So, I fell to writing letters, Mr. Aminadab sipping the wine and playing with one of his watch-chains in the meanwhile.

I wrote to Jones, Brown, and Robinson—to Thompson. and to Jackson likewise. I

wrote to my surly uncle in Pudding-lane. Now was the time to put the disinterested friendship of Brown to the test; to avail myself of the repeated offers of service from Jones; to ask for the loaf of that sixpence which Robinson had repeatedly declared was at my command as long as he had a shilling. I sealed the letters with an unsteady hand, and consulted Mr. Aminadab as to their despatch. That gentleman, by some feat of legerdemain, called up from the bowels of the earth, or from one of those mysterious localities known as "round the corner," two sprites: one, his immediate assistant; seadier, however, and not jewelled, who carried a nobby stick which he continually gawped. The other, a horrible little man with a white head and a white neckcloth, twisted round his neck like a halter. His eye was red, and his teeth were gone, and the odour of rum compassed him about, like a cloak. To these two acolytes my notes were confided, and they were directed to bring the answers like lightning to Blowman's. To Blowman's, in Cursitor-street, Chancery-lane, I was bound, and a cab was straightway called for my conveyance thereto. For the matter of that, the distance was so short, I might easily have walked, but I could not divest myself of the idea that everybody in the street knew I was a prisoner.

I was soon within the hospitable doors of Mr. Blowman, officer to the Sheriff of Middlesex. His hospitable doors were double, and, for more hospitality, heavily barred, locked, and chained. These, with the exceptions of barred windows, and a species of grating-roofed yard outside, like a monster bird-cage, were the only visible signs of captivity. Yet there was enough stone in the hearts, and iron in the souls, of Mr. Blowman's inmates, to build a score of lock-up houses. For that you may take my word.

I refused the offer of a private room, and was conducted to the coffee-room, where Mr. Aminadab left me, for a while, to my own reflections; and to wait for the answers to my letters.

They came—and one friend into the bargain. Jones had gone to Hammersmith, and wouldn't be back till next July. Brown had been disappointed in the City. Robinson's money was all locked up. Thompson expected to be locked up himself. Jackson was brief, but explicit: he said he "would rather not."

My friend brought me a carpet-bag, with what clothes I wanted in it. He advised me, moreover, to go to Whitecross Street at once, for a sojourn at Mr. Blowman's domicile would cost me something like a guinea per diem. So, summoning Mr. Aminadab, who had obligingly waited to see if I could raise the money or not, I announced my intention of being conveyed to gaol at once. I paid half-a-guinea for the accommodation I had had at Mr. Blowman's; I made a pecuniary acknowledgment of Mr. Aminadab's politeness; and I did not fail to remember the

old man in the white halter and the spirituous mantle. Then, when I had also remembered a red-headed little Jew boy who acted as Cerberus to this Hades, and appeared to be continually washing his hands (though they never seemed one whit the cleaner for the operation), another cab was called, and off I went to Whitecross Street, with a heart considerably heavier than a paving-stone.

I had already been three hours in captivity, and it was getting on for eight o'clock. The cab was proceeding along Holborn, and I thought, involuntarily, of Mr. Samuel Hall, black and grimy, making his progress through the same thoroughfare, by the Oxford Road, and so on to Tyburn, bowing to the crowd and cursing the Ordinary. The foot-pavement on either side was thronged with people at their Christmas marketing, or, at least, on some Christmas business—so it seemed to me. Goose Clubs were being held at the public-houses—sweeps for sucking-pigs, plum-puddings, and bottles of gin. Some ladies and gentlemen had begun their Christmas rather too early, and were meandering unsteadily over the flag-stones. Fiddlers were in great request, being sought for in small beershops, and borne off bodily from bars, to assist at Christmas Eve merry-makings. An immense deal of hand-shaking was going on, and I was very much afraid, a good deal more "standing" than was consistent with the strict rules of temperance. Everybody kept saying that it was "only once a year," and made that an apology (so prone we mankind to the use of trivial excuses!) for their sins against Father Mathew. Loud laughter rang through the frosty air. Pleasant jokes, innocent "chaff," passed; grocers' young men toiled lustily, wiping their hot faces ever and anon; butchers took no rest; prize beef melted away from very richness before my eyes; and in the midst of all the bustle and jollity, the crowding, laughing, drinking, and shouting, I was still on my unvarying way to Whitecross Street.

There was a man resting a child's coffin on a railing, and chattering with a pot-boy, with whom he shared a pot of porter, "with the sharp edge taken off." There are heavy hearts—heavier perchance than yours, in London this Christmas Eve, my friend Prupper, thought I. To-morrow's dawn will bring sorrow and faint-heartedness to many thousands—to oceans of humanity, of which you are but a single drop.

The cab had conveyed me through Smith-field Market, and now rumbled up Barbican. My companion, the gentleman with the crab-stick (to whose care Mr. Aminadab had consigned me) beguiled the time with pleasant and instructive conversation. He told me that he had "nabbed a many parties." That he had captured a Doctor of Divinity going to a Christmas, a bridegroom starting for the honeymoon, a Colonel of Hussars in full fig for her Majesty's drawing-room. That he had the honour once

of "nabbing" the eldest son of a peer of the realm, who, however, escaped from him through a second-floor window, and over the tiles. That he was once commissioned to "nab" the celebrated Mr. Wix, of the Theatres Royal. That Mr. Wix, being in the act of playing the Baron Spolaccio, in the famous tragedy of "Love, Ruin, and Revenge," he, Crabstick, permitted him, in deference to the interests of the drama, to play the part out, stationing an assistant at each wing to prevent escape. That the delusive Wix "bilked" him, by going down a trap. That he, Crabstick, captured him, notwithstanding, under the stage, though opposed by the gigantic Wix himself, two stage carpenters, a demon, and the Third Citizen. That Wix rushed on the stage and explained his position to the audience, whereupon the gallery (Wix being an especial favourite of theirs) expressed a strong desire to have his (Crabstick's) blood; and, failing to obtain that, tore up the benches; in the midst of which operation the recalcitrant Wix was removed. With these and similar anecdotes of the nobility, gentry, and the public in general, he was kind enough to regale me, until the cab stopped. I alighted in a narrow dirty street; was hurried up a steep flight of steps; a heavy door clanged behind me; and Crabstick, pocketing his small gratuity, wished me a good night and a merry Christmas. A merry Christmas:ugh!

That night I slept in a dreadful place, called the Reception ward,—on an iron bedstead, in a room with a stone floor. I was alone, and horribly miserable. I heard the Waits playing in the distance, and dreamed I was at a Christmas party.

Christmas morning in Whitecross Street Prison! A turnkey conducted me to the "Middlesex side"—a long dreary yard—on either side of which were doors leading into wards, or coffee-rooms, on the ground floor, and, by stone-staircases, to sleeping apartments above. It was all very cold, very dismal, very gloomy. I entered the ward, allotted to me, Number Seven, left. It was a long room, with barred windows, cross tables and benches, with an aisle between; a large fire at the farther end; "Dum spiro, spero," painted above the mantel-piece. Twenty or thirty prisoners and their friends were sitting at the tables, smoking pipes, drinking beer, or reading newspapers. But for the unmistakeable jail-bird look about the majority of the guests, the unshorn faces, the slippish feet, the barred windows, and the stone floor, I might have fancied myself in a large tap-room.

There was holly and mistletoe round the gas-pipes; but how woful and forlorn they looked! There was roast beef and plum-pudding preparing at the fire-place; but they had neither the odour nor the appearance of free beef and pudding. I was thinking of the cosy room, the snug fire, the well-

drawn curtains, the glittering table, the happy faces, when the turnkey introduced me to the steward of the ward (an officer appointed by the prisoners, and a prisoner himself) who "tables you off," *i.e.*, who allotted me a seat at one of the cross-tables, which was henceforward mine for all purposes of eating, drinking, writing, or smoking; in consideration of a payment on my part of one guinea sterling. This sum made me also free of the ward, and entitled to have my boots-cleaned, my bed made, and my meals cooked. Supposing that I had not possessed a guinea (which was likely enough), I should have asked for time which would have been granted me; but, at the expiration of three days, omission of payment would have constituted me a defaulter; in which case the best thing I could have done would have been to declare pauperism, and remove to the poor side of the prison. Here, I should have been entitled to my "sixpences," amounting, in the aggregate, to the sum of three shillings and sixpence a week towards my maintenance.

The steward, a fat man in a green "wide-awake" hat, who was incarcerated on remand for the damages in an action for breach of promise of marriage, introduced me to the cook (who was going up next week to the Insolvent Court, having filed his schedule as a beer-shop keeper). He told me, that if I chose to purchase anything at a species of everything shop in the yard, the cook would dress it; or, if I did not choose to be at the trouble of providing myself, I might breakfast, dine, and sup at his, the steward's table, "for a consideration," as Mr. Trapbois has it. I acceded to the latter proposition, receiving the intelligence that turkey and oyster-sauce were to be ready at two precisely, with melancholy indifference. Turkey had no charms for me now.

I sauntered forth into the yard, and passed fifty or sixty fellow-unfortunates, sauntering as listlessly as myself. Strolling about, I came to a large grating, somewhat similar to Mr. Blowman's bird-cage, in which was a heavy gate called the "lock," and which communicated with the corridors leading to the exterior of the prison. Here sat, calmly surveying his caged birds within, a turnkey—not a repulsive, gruff-voiced monster, with a red neckerchief and top boots, and a bunch of keys, as turnkeys are popularly supposed to be—but a pleasant, jovial man enough, in sleek black. He had a little lodge behind, where a bright fire burned, and where Mrs. Turnkey, and the little Turnkeys lived. (I found a direful resemblance between the name of his office, and that of the Christmas bird). His Christmas dinner hung to the iron bars above him, in the shape of a magnificent piece of beef. Happy turnkey, to be able to eat it on the outer side of that dreadful grating! In another part of the yard hung a large black board, inscribed in half-effaced characters, with the enumera-

tions of divers donations, made in former times by charitable persons, for the benefit in perpetuity of poor prisoners. To-day, so much beef and so much strong beer was allotted to each prisoner.

But what were beef and beer, what was unlimited tobacco, or even the plum-pudding, when made from prison plums, boiled in a prison copper, and eaten in a prison dining-room? What though surreptitious gin were carried in, in bladders, beneath the under garments of the fairer portion of creation; what though brandy were smuggled into the wards, disguised, as black draughts, or extract of sarsaparilla? A pretty Christmas market I had brought my pigs to!

Chapel was over (I had come down too late from the "Reception" to attend it); and the congregation (a lamentably small one) dispersed in the yard and wards. I entered my own ward, to change (if anything could change) the dreary scene.

Smoking and cooking appeared to be the chief employments and recreations of the prisoners. An insolvent clergyman in rusty black, was gravely rolling out puff-paste on a pie-board; and a man in his shirt-sleeves, covering a veal cutlet with egg and bread-crum, was an officer of dragoons!

I found no lack of persons willing to enter into conversation with me. I talked, full twenty minutes, with a seedy captive, with a white head, and a coat buttoned and pinned up to the chin.

Whitecross Street, he told me (or Burdon's Hotel, as in the prison slang he called it), was the only place where any "life" was to be seen. The Fleet was pulled down; the Marshalsea had gone the way of all brick-and-mortar; the Queen's Prison, the old "Bench," was managed on a strict system of classification and general discipline; and Horsemonger Lane was but rarely tenanted by debtors; but in favoured Whitecross Street, the good old features of imprisonment for debt yet flourished. Good dinners were still occasionally given; "fives" and football were yet played; and, from time to time, obnoxious attorneys, or importunate process-seekers—"rats" as they were called—were pumped upon, floured, and bonneted. Yet, even Whitecross Street, he said with a sigh, was falling off. The Small Debts Act and those revolutionary County Courts would be too many for it soon.

That tall, robust, bushy-whiskered man, (he said) in the magnificently flowered dressing-gown, the crimson Turkish smoking cap, the velvet slippers, and the ostentatiously displayed gold guard-chain, was a "mace-man;" an individual who lived on his wits, and on the want of wit in others. He had had many names, varying from Plantagenet and De Courcy, to "Edmonston and Co.," or plain Smith or Johnson. He was a real gentleman once upon a time—a very long time ago. Since then, he had done a little on the turf, and a great

deal in French hazard, roulette, and *rouge et noir*. He had cheated bill-discounters, and discounted bills himself. He had been a picture-dealer, and a wine-merchant, and one of those mysterious individuals called a "commission agent." He had done a little on the Stock Exchange, and a little billiard-marking, and a little skittle-sharping, and a little thimblerrigging. He was not particular. Bills, however, were his passion. He was under a cloud just now, in consequence of some bill-dealing transaction, which the Commissioner of Insolvency had broadly hinted to be like a bill-stealing one. However, he had wonderful elasticity, and it was to be hoped would soon get over his little difficulties. Meanwhile, he dined sumptuously, and smoked cigars of price; occasionally condescending to toss half-crowns in a hat with any of the other "nobs" incarcerated.

That cap, and the battered worn-out sickly frame beneath, (if I would have the goodness to notice them) were all that were left of a spruce, rosy-cheeked, glittering young ensign of infantry. He was brought up by an old maiden aunt, who spent her savings to buy him a commission in the army. He went from Slowchester Grammar School, to Fastchester Barracks. He was to live on his pay. He gambled a year's pay away in an evening. He made thousand guinea bets, and lost them. So the old *denouement* of the old story came round as usual. The silver dressing-case, got on credit—pawned for ready money; the credit-horses sold; more credit-horses bought; importunate creditors in the barrack-yard; a letter from the colonel; sale of his commission; himself sold up; then Mr. Aminadab, Mr. Blowman, Burdon's Hotel, Insolvent Court, a year's remand; and, an after life embittered by the consciousness of wasted times and talents, and wantonly-neglected opportunities.

My informant pointed out many duplicates of the gentleman in the dressing-gown. Also, divers Government clerks, who had attempted to imitate the nobs in a small way, and had only succeeded to the extent of sharing the same prison; a mild grey-headed old gentleman who always managed to get committed for contempt of court; and the one inevitable baronet of a debtor's prison, who is traditionally supposed to have eight thousand a year, and to stop in prison because he likes it—though, to say the truth, this baronet looked, to me, as if he didn't like it at all.

I was sick of all these, and of everything else in Whitecross Street, before nine o'clock, when I was at liberty to retire to my cold ward. So ended my Christmas-day—my first, and, I hope and believe, my last Christmas-day in prison.

Next morning my welcome friend arrived and set me free. I paid the gate-fees, and I gave the turnkeys a crown, and I gave the prisoners unbounded beer. I kept New Year's day in company with a pretty couple.

with glossy black hair, who was to have dined with me on Christmas-day, and who took such pity on me that she shortly became Mrs. Prupper. Our eldest boy was born, by a curious coincidence, next Christmas-day—which I kept very jovially, with the doctor, after it was all over, and we *didn't* christen him Whitecross.

THE ORPHAN'S DREAM OF CHRISTMAS.

It was Christmas Eve—and lonely,
By a garret window high,
Where the city chimneys barely
Spared a hand's-breadth of the sky,
Sat a child, in age,—but weeping,
With a face so small and thin.
That it seem'd too scant a record
To have eight years traced therein.

Oh, grief looks most distorted
When his hideous shadow lies
On the clear and sunny life-stream
That doth fill a child's blue eyes!
But *her* eye was dull and sunken,
And the whiten'd cheek was gamy,
And the blue veins on the forehead
Were the pencilling of Want.

And she wept for years like jewels,
Till the last year's bitter gall,
Like the acid of the story,
In itself had melted all;
But the Christmas time returned,
As an old friend, for whose eye
She would take down all the pictures
Sketch'd by faithful Memory,

Of those brilliant Christmas seasons,
When the joyous laugh went round;
When sweet words of love and kindness
Were no unfamiliar sound;
When, fit by the log's red lustre,
She her mother's face could see,
And she rock'd the cradle, sitting
On her own twin-brother's knee:

Of her father's pleasant stories;
Of the riddles and the rhymes,
All the kisses and the presents
That had mark'd those Christmas times.
'Twas as well that there was no one
(For it were a mocking strain)
To wish *her* a merry Christmas,
For *that* could not come again.

How there came a time of struggling,
When, in spite of love and faith,
Grinding Poverty would only
In the end give place to Death;
How her mother grew heart-broken,
When her toil-worn father died,
Took her baby in her bosom,
And was buried by his side:

How she clung unto her brother
As the last spar from the wreck,
But stern Death had come between them
While her arms were round his neck.

There were *now* no loving voices;
And, if few hands offered bread,
There were none to rest in blessing
On the little homeless head.

Or, if any gave her shelter,
It was less of joy than fear;
For they welcomed Crime more warmly
To the selfsame room with her.
But, at length they all grew weary
Of their sick and useless guest:
She must try a workhouse welcome
For the helpless and distressed.

But she pryed; and the Unsleeping
In His ear that whisper caught:
So he sent down Sleep, who gave her
Such a respite as she sought;
Drew the fair head to her bosom,
Pressed the wetted eyelids close,
And, with softly-falling kisses,
Lulled her gently to repose.

Then she dreamed the angels, sweeping
With their wings the sky aside,
Raised her swiftly to the country
Where the blessed ones abide:
To a bower all flushed with beauty,
By a shadowy arcade,
Where a mellowness like moonlight
By the Tree of Life was made:

Where the rich fruit sparkled, star-like,
And pure flowers of fadeless dye
Poured their fragrance on the waters
That in crystal beds went by:
Where bright hills of pearl and amber
Closed the fair green valleys round,
And, with rainbow light, but lasting,
Were their glistening summits crown'd.

Then, that distant-burning glory,
'Mid a gorgeousness of light!
The long vista of Archangels
Could scarce chasten to her sight.
There sat One: and her heart told her
'Twas the same, who, for our sin,
Was once born a little baby
"In the stable of an inn."

There was music—oh, such music!—
They were trying the old strains
That a certain group of shepherds
Heard on old Judea's plains;
But, when that divinest chorus
To a softened trembling fell,
Love's true ear discerned the voices
That on earth she loved so well.

At a tiny grotto's entrance
A fair child her eyes beheld,
With his ivory shoulders hidden
'Neath his curls of living gold;
And he asks them, "Is she coming?"
But ere any one can speak,
The white arms of her twin brother
Are once more about her neck.

Then they all come round her greeting;
But she might have well denied
That her beautiful young sister
Is the poor pale child that died;
And the careful look hath vanish'd
From her father's tearless face,
And she does not know her mother
Till she feels the old embrace.

Oh, from that ecstatic dreaming
Must she ever wake again,
To the cold and cheerless contrast—
To a life of lonely pain?

But her Maker's sternest servant
 • To her side on tiptoe stept;
 Told his message in a whisper,—
 And she stir'd not as she slept!

Now the Christmas morn was breaking
 With a dim, uncertain hue,
 And the chilling breeze of morning
 Came the broken window through;
 And the hair upon her forehead,
 Was it lifted by the blast,
 Of the brushing wings of Seraphs,
 With their burden as they pass'd?

All the festive bells were chiming
 To the myriad hearts below;
 But that deep sleep still hung heavy
 On the sleeper's thoughtful brow.
 To her quiet face the dream-light
 Had a lingering glory given;
 But the child, *herself*, was keeping
 Her Christmas-day in Heaven!

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS AFTER A LONG ABSENCE.

SIXTEEN years have past since, a turbulent, discontented boy, I left England for Australia. My first serious study of geography began when I twirled about a great globe to find South Australia, which was then the fashionable colony. My guardians—I was an orphan—were delighted to get rid of so troublesome a personage; so, very soon I was the proud possessor of a town and country lot of land in the model colony of South Australia.

My voyage in a capital ship, with the best fare every day, and no one to say "Charles, you have had enough wine," was pleasant enough: very different from the case of some of my emigrating companions—fathers and mothers with families, who had left good homes, good incomes, snug estates, and respectable professions, excited by speeches at public meetings, or by glowing pamphlets, descriptive of the charms of a colonial life, in a model colony. I learned to smoke, drink grog, and hit a bottle swung from the yard-arm, with pistol or rifle. We had several very agreeable scamps on board; ex-cornets and lieutenants, ex-government clerks, spoiled barristers and surgeons, plucked Oxonians,—empty, good-looking, well-dressed fellows, who had smoked meerschaums, drunk Champagne, Hock, and Burgundy, fought duels, ridden steeple-chases, and contracted debts in every capital in Europe. These distinguished gentlemen kindly took me under their patronage, smoked my cigars, allowed me to stand treat for Champagne, taught me, at some slight expense, the arts of short whist, *écarté*, and unlimited loo; and to treat with becoming *hauteur* any advances on the part of the intermediate passengers.

By the end of the one hundred days of our voyage, I was remarkably altered, but whether improved, may be a question; as the leading principles I had imbibed, were to the effect, that work of any kind was low, and that debts were

gentlemanly. My preconceived notions of a model colony, with all the elements of civilisation, as promised in London, were rather upset, by observing, on landing, just within the wash of high-water, on the sandy beach, heaps of furniture, a grand piano or two, and chests of drawers in great numbers; and I especially remember a huge iron-banded oak plate-chest, half full of sand, and empty. The cause of this wholesale abandonment was soon made plain to me, in the shape of a charge of ten pounds for conveying my trunks in a bullock wagon, of which they formed less than half the load, seven miles from the port to the city of Adelaide;—the said city, which looked so grand in water colours in the Emigration Rooms in London, being at that time a picturesque and uncomfortable collection of tents, mud huts, and wooden cottages, curiously warped, rather larger than a Newfoundland dog's kennel, but letting for the rent of a mansion in any agricultural county of England.

It is not my intention, now, to tell the tale of the fall of the Model Colony and colonists of South Australia, and the rise of the Copper Mines, which I did not stay to see. When a general smash was taking place on all sides, I accepted the offer of a rough diamond of an overlander, who had come across from the old colony with a lot of cattle and horses to sell to the Adelaideans. He had taken a fancy to me in consequence of the skill I had displayed in bleeding a valuable colt at a critical moment; one of the few useful things I had learned in England; and, when my dashing companions were drinking themselves into *delirium tremens*, enlisting in the police, accepting situations as shepherds, sponging for dinners on the once-despised "snobs," and imploring the captains of ships to let them work their way home before the mast, he offered to take me with him to his station in the interior, and "make a man of me." I turned my back on South Australia, and abandoned my country lot, on an inaccessible hill, to nature, and sold my town lot for five pounds. I began to perceive that work was the only means of getting on in a colony.

Accordingly, into the far Bush I went, and on the plains of a new-settled district, all solitary; constantly in danger from savage blacks; constantly occupied in looking after the wild shepherds and stockmen (herdsmen) of my overland friend; passing days on horse-back at one period; at another, compelled to give my whole attention to the details of a great establishment,—I rubbed off my old skin.

My fashionable affectations died away; my life became a *reality*, dependent on my own exertions. It was then that my heart began to change; it was then that I began to think tenderly of the brothers and sisters I had left behind, and with whom I had communicated so little in the days of my selfishness. Rarely oftener than twice, in a year could I find

means to forward letters ; but the pen, once so hateful to me, became now, in hours of leisure, my great resource. Often and often have I sat in my hut at midnight, filling pages with my thoughts, my feelings, my regrets. The fire burning before my hut, where my men were sleeping, reminded me that I was not alone in the great pastoral desert, which sloping away from my station, rolled for hundreds of miles. Every sound was redolent of the romance of the strange land to which I had transplanted myself. The howl of the dingo prowling round my sheep-folds ; the defying bark of my watchful dogs ; the cry of the strange night-birds ; and sometimes, echoing from the rocky ranges, the wild mountainous songs of the fierce aborigines, as they danced their corrobories, and acted dramas representing the slaughter of the white man, and the plunder of his cattle. When such noises met my ear, I looked up to the rack where my arms lay, ready loaded, and out to where a faithful sentinel, the rebel O'Donohue, or the poacher, Giles Brown, with musket on shoulder paced up and down, ready to die, but not to surrender. In this great desert, the petty cares, mean tricks of land jobbing all the little contrivances for keeping up appearances no longer needed, were forgotten. My few books were not merely read ; they were learned by heart. If in the morning I tired horses in galloping my rounds, and settled strife among my men with rude words, and even blows ; in the evening, sitting apart, I was lost in the wanderings of Abraham, the trials of Job, or the Psalms of David.

I followed St. John into the wilderness, not unlike that before my eyes, and listened far from cities to the Sermon on the mount. At other times, as I paced along the open forests, I made the woods resound with the speeches of Homer's heroes, or the outbursts of Shakspeare's characters—outbursts that came home to me : for, in those lone regions, I was chief, warrior, and almost priest ; for, when there was a death, I read the funeral service. And thus I educated myself.

While thus recalling friends neglected, and opportunities misused, and pleasant scenes of Eastern County life, I most loved to dwell upon the Christmas time of dear old England.

In our hot summer of Australian December, when the great river that divided and bounded my pastures drivelled to a string of pools, and my cattle were panting around—at the quiet hour of the evening, when the stars, shining with a brilliancy unknown in northern climes, realised the idea of the blessed night when the star of Bethlehem startled and gilded the kings of the Eastern world on their pious pilgrimage,—my thoughts travelled across the sea to England. I did not feel the sultry heat, or hear the cry of the night-bird, or the howl of the dingo. I was across the sea, among the Christmas revellers. I saw the gay flushed faces of my kindred and friends shining round the Christmas table ; the

grace was said, the toast went round. I heard my own name mentioned, and the gay faces grew sad. Then I awoke from my dream and found myself alone, and wept. But in a life of action there is no time for useless grieving, though time enough for reflection and resolution. Therefore, after visions like these, I resolved that the time should come when, on a Christmas-day, the toast "*to absent friends*" should be answered by the Australian himself.

The time did come—this very year of the half century. Earnest labour and sober economy had prospered with me. The rich district in which I was one of the earliest pioneers, had become settled and pacified, as far as the river ran ; the wild Myalls had grown into the tame, blanket-clothed dependents of the settlers. Thousands of fine-woolled flocks upon the hills, and cattle upon the rich flats, were mine ; the bark hut had changed into a verandahed cottage, where books and pictures formed no insignificant part of the furniture ; neighbours were within a ride ; the voices of children often floated sweetly along the waters of the river.

Then said I to myself, I can return now. Not to remain ; for the land I have conquered from the wilderness shall be my home for life : but I will return, to press the hands that have longed for many years to press mine ; to kiss away the tears that dear sisters shed when they think of me, once almost an outcast ; to take upon my knees those little ones who have been taught to pray for their "uncle in a far land across the broad deep sea." Perhaps I had a thought of winning some rosy English face and true English heart to share my pastoral home.

I did return, and trod again the shores of my mother country. My boyish expectations had not been realised, but better hopes had. I was not returning laden with treasures, to rival the objects of my foolish youthful vanity ; but I was returning thankful, grateful, contented, independent, to look round once more on my native land, and then return to settle in the land of my adoption.

It was mid-winter when I landed at a small fishing village in the extreme west of England ; for my impatience made me take advantage, during a calm in the Channel, of the first fisher's boat that boarded us.

The nearer we approached the shore, the more impatient I grew to land. I insisted on giving my help to one of the heavy oars ; and so sooner had we touched the ground, than, throwing myself into the water, I waded on shore. Oh, easy-going men of the great world, there are some pleasures you can never taste ; and among them is the enthusiasm, the heart-felt, awe-stricken admiration of the dweller among pastoral plains when he finds himself once more at home among the gardens of England.

Garden is the only word to express the

appearance of England, especially the west, where the bright green myrtle lingers through the winter, and the road-side near every town is bordered with charming cottages. At every mile I found some new object of admiration, above all, the healthful fresh cheeks of the people; especially the sturdy, yet delicate-complexioned lasses tripping away, basket in hand, from the markets in numbers, startling to one who had lived long where the arrival of one fair white face was an event.

The approach to the first great town was signalled by tokens less pleasing—nay, absolutely painful—beggars, as I passed, stood in their rags and whined for alms; and others, not less pitiful in appearance, did not beg, but looked so wan and miserable that it made my heart bleed. I gave to all, so that the man who drove me stared. He stared still more, when I told him that I came from a country where there were no poor save the drunken and the idle.

Entering a great town, the whirl, the commotion of passers on foot, on horseback, and in vehicles of all kinds, made me giddy; it was like a sort of nightmare. The signs of wealth, the conveniences provided for every imaginable want, were very strange to me, fresh from a country where able-bodied labour was always in demand, while a man thought himself equal to the longest journey, through an untrodden country, with a blanket and a tin-pot for all his furniture, and all his cooking apparatus.

When I called in the landlord of the Inn to consult about getting on to Yorkshire in two days, as I wished to be with my friends as soon as possible, he said, "If you stay and rest to-night, you can get there by the railroad to-morrow morning, in good time to eat your Christmas dinner." I had never thought of that, and had only a vague idea what a railroad was like.

I reached the starting-place next morning, just in time to take my seat in a departing train. I started when, with a fearful sound of labouring machinery, we moved: then whirled away. I was ashamed of my fears; yet there were many in that train to whom a sea voyage would have been less terrible than the solitary land journeys on horseback through the Bush of Australia, which were to me a ~~sure~~ matter of course. Without accident, I reached the station near York, where I had to take a conveyance to reach by a cross country road the house where I knew that one of my brothers, farming a few hundred acres of his own land, assembled as many of our family as possible at Christmas time.

The little inn was able to supply a gig, driven by a decayed post-boy. Plunging at once into questioning conversation, I found an old acquaintance in the driver, without revealing who I was. Not many years older than myself, soured, disappointed, racked in health, he took a different view of life to anything I had yet heard. All along my road through Eng-

land I had been struck by the prosperous condition of the well-to-do people I had met in first-class carriages. His occupation, his glory, was departed; he was obliged to do anything, and wear anything, instead of his once smart costume, and once pleasant occupation—instead of his gay jacket, and rapid ride, and handsome presents from travellers, and good dinners from landlords. In doleful spirits, he had a score of tales to tell of others worse off than himself—of landlords of posting-houses in the workhouse, and smart four-in-hand coachmen begging their bread—of farmers sunk down to labourers; and other doleful stories of the fate of those who were not strong enough for the race of life in England. Then I began to see there are two sides to the life that looked so brilliant out of the plate-glass windows of a first-class carriage.

The luxuries and comforts which taxes and turnpikes buy, are well worth the cost to those who can pay them; those who cannot, will do better to make shift in a colony. Thus thinking and talking, as I approached the place where, unexpected, I was to appear before a gathering of my relations, my flow of spirits died away. The proud consciousness of having conquered fortune, the beauty of the winter scenery (for winter, with its hoar frost shading the trees and foliage, has strange dazzling beauty to the eyes of those who have been accustomed to the one perpetual green-brown of semi-tropical Australia) had filled me full to overflowing with bounding joyousness. Gaily I answered back to the "Good night, master," of the passing peasantry, and vigorously puffed at my favourite pipe, in clouds that rivalled and rolled along with the clouds of mist that rose from the sweating horses. But the decayed postilion's stories of misery, in which he seemed to revel, damped me. My pipe went out, and my chin sunk despondingly on my breast. At length I asked, "Did he know the Barnards?" "Oh, yes, he knew them all." Mr. John had been very lucky with the railroad through one of his farms. He had ridden a pair at Miss Margaret's wedding, and driven a mourning coach at Miss Mary's funeral. The mare in the gig had belonged to Mr. John, and had been a rare good huster. Mr. Robert had doctored him for his rheumatics. "Did he know any more?" "Oh, yes; there was Master Charles; he went abroad somewhere to furren parts. Some people say he's dead, got killed, or hung, or something; and some say he's made a power of money. He was a wild slip of a lad. Many a time he's been out in the roads with some one I know very well, snaring hares and smoking of pheasants. There's a mark on my forehead now, where I fell; when he put a furze bush under the tail of a colt I was breaking. He was a droll chap, surely." There was scarcely a kind feeling in the poor man's breast. The loss of his occupation, poverty, and drink, had sadly changed the fine

country lad, barely ten years older than myself, whom I had left behind in England. So, turning, I said, "Well, Joe, you don't seem to remember me; I am Charles Barnard."—"Lord, sir!" he answered, in a whining tone, "I beg your pardon. You are a great gentleman; I always thought you would be. So, you are going to dine with Mr. John? Well, sir, I hope you won't forget a Christmas-box, for old acquaintance sake?" I was repelled, and wished myself back in Australia; my mind began to misgive me as to the wisdom of my unexpected visit.

It was bright moonlight when we drove into the village. I had a mile to walk; I would not let chattering Joe drive me; so left him happy over a hot supper, with no stinted allowance of ale. I walked on quickly, until approaching the old house—the mansion-house, once, but the estates had long been divided from it—I paused. My courage failed as I passed through the gate; their clang disturbed the dogs—they began to bark fiercely. I was a stranger; the dogs that knew me were all dead. Twice I paced round, with difficulty repressing my emotion, before I could find courage to approach the door. The peals of laughter, the gay music that rang out from time to time, the lights flying from window to window of the upper rooms, filled me with pleasing-painful feelings, long unknown. There was fully in my mysterious arrival; but romance is part of a life of solitude. Unreasonably, I was for a moment vexed that they could be so merry; but next moment better thoughts prevailed. I stepped to the well-remembered door, and rang a great peal; the maid opened it to me without question, for many guests were expected. As I stooped to lay aside my cloak and cap, a lovely child in white ran down the stairs, threw her arms round my neck, and, with a hearty kiss, cried, "I have caught you under the mistletoe, cousin Alfred." Then she started from me, and loosening her hold, and staring at me with large timid brown eyes, said,—"Who are you? you are not a new uncle, are you?" Oh, how my heart was relieved! the child saw a likeness; I should not be disowned. All my plans, all my preparations were forgotten; I was in the midst of them; and after fifteen years I saw again the Christmas fire, the Christmas table, the Christmas faces, that I had dreamed of so often! To describe that night is impossible. Long after midnight, we sat; the children unwillingly left my knees for bed; my brothers gazed and wondered; my sisters crowded round me, kissed my brown-bearded cheeks, and pressed my sun-burned hands. Many new scenes of blessed Christmas may I have; never one like that which welcomed the wanderer home!

But although England has its blessed seasons and festivals, in which Christmas-day stands first; and, although that Christmas meeting will often and again be before my

eyes, I cannot stay in England. My life is moulded to my adopted country; and where I have earned fortune, there I will spend it. The restraints, the conventionalities, the bonds created by endless divisions of society, are more than I can endure; care seems to sit on every brow, and scornful pride in imaginary social superiority on too many.

I have found the rosy English face, and the true English heart! Some one who listened to the Australian stories of my Christmas week, which my friends were never tired of hearing, is ready to leave all and follow me to my pastoral home. I am now preparing for departure; and neither society, nor books, nor music, will be wanting in what was, when I first knew it, a forest and grassy desert, peopled with wild birds and kangaroos. Nearly twenty relations accompany me; some of them poor enough. In a few years you may find the Barnard-town settlement on Australian maps; and there, at Christmas time, or any time, true men and good women shall meet with welcome and help from me, for I shall never forget that I once began the world, a shepherd in a solitude, and gazed on the bright stars of a Christmas-night, shining in a hot and cloudless sky.

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS IF YOU OUT-GROW IT.

THE floods round the little classic town of Bulferry were frozen. The trees round the meadows of St. Agnus Dei de Pompadour were the same. Dons went to chapel regularly, but the Dean of St Agnus appeared in an extensive funeral-looking cloak, and the Sub-Dean coughed louder, and made more mistakes in the responses, by reason of deafness, than heretofore. Coal and Blanket Societies were talked of. In few words, Christmas was fast approaching, and University men were looking forward to spending that season in town or country, according to their residence, inclinations, or invitations.

Among the many young men who stood on the platform, awaiting the blazing dragon, which in two hours' time was to convey them to London, perhaps to take a chop at the "Cock," a little dinner at Verrey's, and a three-and-sixpenny cab-fare to some other station, was Mr. Horace De Lisle, a freshman, who had come "up" in the preceding October, and was now hastening back to the paternal hearth at St. Maurice, a charming little vicarage in Warwickshire, just large enough to be the best house in the village, just small enough to be sociable, allowing of half-a-dozen spare beds. Practically religious, without any morbid affectation of any "isms," the Rev. Augustus De Lisle was the best and most popular parson for miles round. His income might be some four hundred a year, besides a little property in the funds; but judicious economy, and a little success in "gentleman farming," made it go very far,

and St. Maurice rectory boasted its occasional dinner party, its billiard room, and its plain carriage; while few of the poor or sick ever went away unrelieved. Mrs. De Lisle was a good and clever woman, and educated her own daughters; which saved money and morals at the same time.

However, like the generality of clergymen who have not much preferment, and who really do good, the Rev. Augustus De Lisle had a large family. Girls, even when educated at home, cost something; boys cost a great deal more, and cannot be kept at home. Two or three had been got off his hands, but Horace had been a pet boy, kept at home a good deal through ill health. He was very amiable, loved his sisters and mother, and his father had made him a capital scholar. Several people were surprised when he took the St. Agnus Dei scholarship, and took the "bounce" out of the Tipton and Whortleberry boys at the same time.

And so Horace had been sent to the University, with the promise of eighty or a hundred pounds a year from his father, an odd present of fifty from an aunt, and a lot of tears, blessings, and hints at advice from his mother. He had now passed his first term. He had made up his mind to take a "double first," the Iceland scholarship, and the English verse; he found Arnold's *Thucydides* a very stupid book, and wondered how it was that nothing "took" in the publishing way, unless it was "translated from the German." He believed in "stunning feeds," and began to have some ideas on the subject of claret.

But he had still far too much love for home to find even a lingering inclination for a further stay. Moreover, ambition seemed to send him homeward. The Dean had said, in a gruff voice, "Very well, sir!" to his construing of the "Birds" of Aristophanes; the Rev. John o' Gaunt, his tutor, had expanded his lank lips into a smile, and had commended his Latinity; and here was news for his father! Again, he wanted to see Jack Harrowgate, his old shooting companion, to whom his favourite sister Lucy was engaged. Jack was a tremendous rough manly fellow, with a very kind heart, and great powers of sociability. Even Bruiser, of St. Alb-Cornice, who had thrashed the "Bunstead Grinder," shrank into insignificance when compared with Jack; and Smillington, of St. Una de Lion, could not sing, "Down among the dead men," half so well. Besides all this, Horace had some few private anxieties and doubts—of which anon.

Great as was the readiness and frequency with which slang phrases were bandied to and fro at the University, there was one little word which seemed more in use than any, and which half the University appeared to be living to illustrate.

When Horace first appeared at St. Agnus Dei, one of his first proceedings was to pay for his furniture; and to purchase the goodwill of the cups and saucers of the last

inmate of his rooms. Several other ready-money transactions, on a small scale, evinced his desire and intention of avoiding debt; and as his father had not only advised him to do so, but had furnished him with the means of eking out the small allowance of his scholarship, he himself felt ill-justified in overrunning his known income.

But that word was sounding, ringing, dinning, and booming in his ears, hour after hour, day after day. That word was staring in his face; whizzing before his eyes; insinuating itself into his food; adulterating the wine he drank. It stared at him in the form of one man's boots (so much better fitting than old Last's, at St. Maurice); in the broad stripe of another man's elegantly-cut trousers; in the glossy hat of another; in the faultless, close-to-the-waist-when-unbuttoned dress coat of another. It took all sorts of forms. It would transfer itself into a walking-cane, at one end of a street; and at the end of another, it had suddenly become a plaid scarf, or a coral-headed breast-pin. Sometimes it would appear as a Yorkshire pie; sometimes as a musical box. At one moment, just as he thought it was a pair of hair-brushes, it would suddenly turn itself into a steak and oyster sauce at Clifton's. In the dreams of men, it would haunt them; in their walks, it would cling to their very feet; in their reading moments, it lay open before them; in their smoking ones, it fumed with them. And that word was tick, tick, tick.

But Horace was not in debt. Oh no! He had only commenced a few accounts for things which "one could not very well pay for till the end of term;" and when the end of term came, he found he was obliged to write home for five pounds to come home with, and this, as it was his first term, his father thought nothing of. Then, he had "been obliged" to order "one or two things" at Stilly and Cabbagenet, the great tailor's; but there could be no harm in that, because their names were put down on the list of tradesmen his tutor had handed him. Then, there were one or two little presents for his sisters, and a ring and a new watch-chain, which "he could pay for next term," and one or two other matters—but "nothing of consequence."

If you had seen how Horace kissed his sisters and mother, and how happy and how jolly he seemed when he got home, you would have been pleased, I think. He was certainly more manly in speech and manner, and more confident in expressing opinions; but he had lost none of his social frankness and good-nature. But Christmas was getting close at hand, and Horace, somehow or other, did not evince so lively an interest in the preparations for it as formerly. He said something in reference to "their always boring about mince-meat;" and he thought the charity-school dinner might be managed cheaper and with less trouble at the school-house, than in their own kitchen.

Moreover, his father could scarcely understand the necessity of his reading in a bright-coloured chintz gown, lined with bright red silk, although his sisters thought it very pretty. His mother was afraid that his set of studs, representing little bunches of jewelled grapes, must have been rather expensive—"But then, he had always been a quiet boy at home, and would not do so again." He also drank more wine, and once laughed about "boys taking two glasses of port after dinner;" he ordered some pale ale up from London; and abused tea as ditch-water, alleging that it hurt his nerves, and prevented him from reading. He called his pony a "mere hack," and showed discrimination in matters relating to horse-flesh.

But all these were minor difficulties, and Horace had too much real goodness of heart to ask his father for more money, or to obtrude his artificial wants—except in fits of occasional peevishness. Besides, the Bishop of St. Epps was so pleased with his *début* at St. Agnus Dei, that he had obtained for him an "exhibition," which put another thirty pounds a-year into his pocket. This comforted him on the score of his present experiments with rick.

Christmas passed away, merrily. The house was a perfect bower of holly; good, wholesome dinners, and lively hearty parties in the evening. "kept" the St. Maurice Christmas in genuine, downright style. And then came more junketing. Laura, thinking that there was no particular occasion to run away to the Lakes, as if marriage were a wicked action, said "yes" one evening to a curious question of Jack Harrington's, and absolutely got married next week. You may fancy what everybody said and did upon that occasion!

And now came the time for Horace to go back. Despite the domesticity of home, despite the absence of cold ducks at breakfast, of claret after dinner, and of lobster salad for supper—despite the rough want of etiquette, which led Jack Harrington to dance with his own wife, to prefer the ale of the St. Maurice and the Goat to Bass or All-sopp, and to drink healths at his own dinner parties,—Horace had not found so sincere, or so soundly rational a companion at college. He went back—and with some regrets.

* * * * *

It is a full three years, perhaps a trifle more, since Horace spent Christmas at his parental home. Many changes have taken place in that time. Laura is getting matronly on the strength of baby Number Two. Jack is getting additionally serious; looks more sharply after business; and gives fewer (though not less sociable) parties. The Reverend the Vicar of St. Maurice has got a small prebend, with the profits of which, he has insured his life in favour of three yet unmarried daughters. This Christmas at St. Maurice bids fair to rival all past Christmases in jollity, merriment, and social delight. Jack has just cleared

a few hundreds by a lucky hit of judicious speculation, and declares he will spare no expense in celebrating baby Number One's second birthday, which falls on "boxing" day.

But where is Horace? Will he be as sociable as he used to be? Will he come up a prodigy of scholarship and good-nature, half a don, yet with a whole and a sound heart? The train is expected; crowds are waiting on the platform, just as they waited this time three years since, and—Horace is among them.

But which is Horace? It cannot be that young gentleman with haughty looks, a delicately robust or robustly-delicate figure, a bundle of whips in his hand, and two Scotch terriers held in with a string! It cannot be that white-over-coated, crushed-hatted, striped-shirted individual! And yet it is he too. With whom is he talking? It cannot be—yes! it is, it must be—the Honourable Charley Cracker. Where are they going? Surely Horace will go direct home? We doubt it.

Arrived in London—a little dinner at some West End house—beat up Sprigs, now in the 12th. Two or three fellows that the Honourable Charley Cracker knows—Horace must know them. "De Lisle, of St. Agnus Dei." "Permit me to introduce you to my friend Sprigs, formerly of St. Walnuts De Grove—capital fellow—only sent away for smashing the college pump (this in an *aside*). Adjourn to the Lyceum—farce getting slow—so on to the Claret Cup, to hear Mr. Pope sing the "Cross Bones" and "O, Mrs. Manning!" Get tired, so on again to the Parthenon Saloon—no dancing—only look on—feel seedy—soda-water and brandy too light; pale ale, squeamish; port, too heavy; and so to bed, at Jarrett's Hotel. Headache—late hours in the morning—fish breakfast at Greenwich—rather better—"may as well go home in a day or two as now," &c., &c.

A day or two is soon gone. Horace thinks he may as well go and "look in at the governor;" and so he leaves the Honourable Charley Cracker. Honourable Charley Cracker is not a rogue or a sharper. He is merely an ass. He is a pupil of Horace De Lisle besides, who has taken to "coaching," and is open to any eligible offer with which ten or seventeen pounds a term is connected. He quits London with a sigh, takes out his purse with another, and a deeper sigh.

Laura is as pretty a young mamma as you will meet in a long summer-day's walk, and Horace cannot help thinking so. But he don't like babies; and baby Number One has taken alarm at his handsomest terrier, and is squalling energetically. Jack's old-fashioned house, with the window-door opening into a little snuggery of flowers and vegetables, is very different to Lady De Montfaucon's conservatory, where he used to play chess, smoke cigars, and sometimes read, with his last long vacation pupil, the future Earl of Spitalfields. At home it is much the

name. There is not so much as a bottle of hock in the whole cellar; they *will* let the cat sleep on the rug in the dining-room, and the carriage is the same old-fashioned "tub" as ever.

However, he gets over baby's birthday tolerably well, although he wishes Jack didn't know so many farmers. Besides, Jack *will* nurse baby Junior himself, and *will* hawk out baby Senior to shake his diminutive fists, at new comers in general. He feels glad to get back again to the rectory, but it is very slow there. His father doesn't know the Montmorencies, nor the Honourable Charley Cracker, and wonders why he did not get the fellowship at St. Swithin. Furthermore, Bessy and Fanny have both got beaux; and the beaux are not University men. Tom Harris, the surgeon, would never do to introduce to the Honourable Charley, although Tom has a snug little practice, and has furnished his house in a style that will outlast half a thousand University friendships, and will make Bessy a thoroughly good husband. Fanny's intended is the new curate, who is not over High Church; in fact, Horace thinks him rather a "pump," and wonders how he can live upon a hundred and twenty pounds a year.

Horace owes a few odd hundred pounds; but Standish and Co. and Stotty and Cabbagenet are very quiet as yet, and he will give them a "few pounds" as soon as he can spare it. In fact, half the bills have not yet been sent in, for his debts are mostly of latter-day University growth. He has done respectably well in the school, but nothing more. He has, however, a large connexion, picks up pupils, and does hope to pick up something else: indefinitely oscillating between the living of Dumdum, in the gift of the Montmorency family (his scholarship will give him a title); something under government (he knows the Prime Minister's aunt's second cousin); and the Woolsack. But all his friends, who used to hear him decide the fate of the Continent in a speech of twenty minutes, at the *Vox et praterea Nihil* Association, fill him with notions of briefs, oyster breakfasts, and the Temple. The difficulty is, the money. Cold-blooded as he is grown to home associations, he has no heart to rob Bessy and Fanny of the few hundreds their father can give with them; still less to stint the younger members of their just meed of what he has himself enjoyed. But he is an unhappy creature. He wants everything and everybody—except the things and people around him; he is reserved where he used to be open, parsimonious from necessity where he was once generous. He cannot settle to anything, and the few days he has been at home have bored him as much as the conversation of the Honourable Charley would have bored his father. Other people perceive the change, and even he begins to have a glimpse of self-reproach.

But, just as he is wondering why the deuce he thought of spending Christmas at home, a reprieve arrives in the shape of a letter from The Honourable Charley; who, having in an evil hour accepted an invitation to his guardian's, finds he has nobody to smoke or drink pale ale with, and conceives a sudden desire for reading. The pay is liberal; and, if it were not, getting away from home for the remaining nine or ten days of the vacation would be a fair equivalent for any amount of instruction likely to be imbibed by the mental absorbents of Charley's mind.

Mrs. De Lisle cannot bear the idea of her "dear boy" leaving home before even the pudding is finished, especially as Jack Harrington has invited the whole family to keep Twelfth Night. Twelfth Night at Jack's! Noisy children, country dances, perhaps snap-dragon, and perhaps blindman's buff, with sisters Bessy and Fanny-slipping out on the staircase, and coming in with heightened complexions, looking as if they had been kissed by goblins in human shape. Twelfth Night characters, too! Perhaps draw a love motto with Polly Bright, the old half-pay admiral's daughter, about whom he once liked to be teased. Never!

And so Horace goes away. His father, perhaps, feels but little grieved; for he hopes and thinks that his son's journey may tend to his future advantage, and he is too sensible to cherish that home-sickness which sometimes prevents a man from ever making a home for himself. But his mother cannot bear his sublime disdain of all the little innocent things that once called forth his highest approbation. She is almost afraid Polly Bright looks thin and anxious; and she remembers that, just three years ago, Horace joked about his "little wife;" and she wishes that, even by one kind look, he had repeated the joke. It is all one to Horace, who is gone.

To be happy, Horace, or to be really merry? My friend, my friend, a word in your ear! You may be quite sure that you have grown too fast, when you find that you have outgrown Christmas. It is a very bad sign indeed.

THE ROUND GAME OF THE CHRISTMAS BOWL.

[THIS Round Game, which comes, originally, from Fairy-Land, is thus played. The Pool of the game is a capacious circular bowl, or basin, made of ice. It is some sixty or seventy feet in circumference, and all round the rim there is stuck a hedge of holly-boughs, in full berry, interspersed with coloured lamps and silver bells. Everybody who is inspired by Christmas festivities comes to put into the Pool. He is to put in something which is his pride. In doing this he generally throws in something which is equally his trouble; and thus, by doing a generous act at Christmas, in throwing away

his pride, he at the same time gets rid of one of his worst troubles.]

The Hymn.

HERE is a Pool, all made of ice,
For a great round Christmas Game !
Its rim is set with green holly boughs,
And lamps of colour'd flame ;
With silver bells that tinkle and gingle
As each one his offering comes to mingle,—
Whether ingot of gold, or a grey sea shingle.
Who comes first?—"Tis the King, I declare,
With the crown in his hand, and the frost in his hair !
Close to the Pool he brings his crown,
And tosses it o'er the holly !
So, away to the bottom goes all his pride,
And his royal melancholy ;
While gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
And round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

Who comes next?—
"Tis a Minister of State,
With a Puzzle made of weights and wheels,
And balanced on his pate !
To the Pool of Christmas Offerings
The Treasury Lord advances ;
Souse over, goes his Puzzle,
And away his Lordship dances !
While gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
And round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

Who comes next ?
"Tis the First Gold Stick !
With the First Cock'd Hat !
And the First General Brick !
In the Pool they toss their darlings—
Sword—hat—stick—garniture !
And retire to the *allegro*
Of the Minuet de la Cour !

But while they caper back,
Three Slaves-to-Dress advance,
In splendid, killing curls and rouge,—
The last bright thought of France !
They say—"Tis Christmas time ;
To the Round Game we will come ;
Let us throw away our fashions,
And—for once—let's look at home !"
While gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
And round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

But who comes now ?
"Tis the Bishop in his carriage,
Whose shoulders bear the pain and pride
Of Church and State's mis-marriage :
A huge bale of lawn and purple
He heaves into the Pool,
And, nodding to his coachman,
Trips off, relieved and cool !

The Millionaire comes next,
With a loan to help a war,
On the wrong side of all justice—
And his "interest" not so sure.
He inflates—and he collapses—
His mind grows sick and dim—
Oh, the pang of breeding money !—
His loan settles o'er the brim !

With gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
As round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

Who is this in red and gold ?
'Tis the Soldier with his sword,
And riding on a cannon—
Bedizen'd, bless'd, adored !
Round his neck he wears a chain,
For a show and a pretence,
But engraved with fiery letters
Claiming blind obedience :
His pride and bane are loosed—
They fly o'er the holly fence !
Next, a Lawyer, with his costs—
Making full a thousand pounds,
With a score of breaking hearts,
And five years of waste and wounds.
His face is cold and wretched—
His life is but a span—
A red tape-worm, at the best,
In a black coat stuff'd with brain :
He tosses o'er his bill of costs !—
He is quite another man !
With gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
And round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

The Merchant brings his bargain,
Which would beggar half a town ;—
The Schenker shows a "spec,"
But deserves each good man's frown ;—
The Scholar brings his book,
Where his soul, all moulting, lies ;—
The Poet brings his laurel
And his castle in the skies ;—
The Lover brings his mistress
Who has treated him with scorn ;—
The Shepherd brings his favourite lamb,
With its curly fleece unshorn ;—
All these into the Pool
Are cast, with various smarts,
As valued Christmas Offerings,
Inspired with Christmas hearts !
While gingle ! tinkle ! gingle !
How the sweet bells ring !
And round about the lighted Pool
We gambol, dance, and sing !

[The crowd of players at the Game, having joined hands in this concluding dance, no whirl round the Pool of Ice, gambolling and singing ; and they continue to do this, till the charm begins to work, and the heat of the Christmas hearts outside causes the Offering which each has thrown in, to warm to such a genial glow, that the heat thus collectively generated, melts the ice. The Pool gradually dissolves—the players of the game, one after another, sink down exhausted, and fall into delightful reverie ; while the melted Pool overflows, and floats every one of them to home, as he seems to lie in a mother-of-pea boat, with a branch of holly at the prow, and a coloured lamp amidst the green leaves and red berries. Each one, soon after, renews his senses just enough to find himself lying comfortably in bed, and listening to the waits.]

A ROUND OF STORIES

BY THE CHRISTMAS FIRE.

BEING THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF ONE REGULAR NUMBER AND A HALF.

CHRISTMAS, 1852.

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THE POOR RELATION'S STORY.

HE was very reluctant to take precedence of so many respected members of the family, by beginning the round of stories they were to relate as they sat in a goodly circle by the Christmas fire; and he modestly suggested that it would be more correct if "John our esteemed host" (whose health he begged to drink) would have the kindness to begin. For as to himself, he said, he was so little used to lead the way, that really— But as they all cried out here, that he must begin, and agreed with one voice that he might, could, would, and should begin, he left off rubbing his hands, and took his legs out from under his arm-chair, and did begin.

I have no doubt (said the poor relation) that I shall surprise the assembled members of our family, and particularly John our esteemed host to whom we are so much indebted for the great hospitality with which he has this day entertained us, by the confession I am going to make. But, if you do me the honor to be surprised at anything that falls from a person so unimportant in the family as I am, I can only say that I shall be scrupulously accurate in all I relate.

I am not what I am supposed to be. I am quite another thing. Perhaps before I go further, I had better glance at what I am supposed to be.

It is supposed, unless I mistake—the assembled members of our family will correct me if I do, which is very likely (here the poor relation looked mildly about him for contradiction); that I am nobody's enemy but my own. That I never met with any particular success in anything. That I failed in business because I was unbusiness-like and credulous—in not being prepared for the interested designs of my partner. That I failed in love, because I was ridiculously trustful—in thinking it impossible that Christiana could deceive me. That I failed in my expectations from my uncle Chill, on

account of not being so sharp as he could have wished in worldly matters. That, through life, I have been rather put upon and disappointed, in a general way. That I am at present a bachelor of between fifty-nine and sixty years of age, living on a limited income in the form of a quarterly allowance, to which I see that John our esteemed host wishes me to make no further allusion.

The supposition as to my present pursuits and habits is to the following effect.

I live in a lodging in the Clapham Road—a very clean back room, in a very respectable house—where I am expected not to be at home in the day-time, unless poorly; and which I usually leave in the morning at nine o'clock, on pretence of going to business. I take my breakfast—my roll and butter, and my half-pint of coffee—at the old established coffee-shop near Westminster Bridge; and then I go into the City—I don't know why—and sit in Garraway's Coffee House, and on 'Change, and walk about, and look into a few offices and counting-houses where some of my relations or acquaintance are so good as to tolerate me, and where I stand by the fire if the weather happens to be cold. I get through the day in this way until five o'clock, and then I dine: at a cost, on the average, of one and threepence. Having still a little money to spend on my evening's entertainment, I look into the old-established coffee-shop as I go home, and take my cup of tea, and perhaps my bit of toast. So, as the large hand of the clock makes its way round to the morning hour again, I make my way round to the Clapham Road again, and go to bed when I get to my lodging—fire being expensive, and being objected to by the family on account of its giving trouble and making a dirt.

Sometimes, one of my relations or acquaintances is so obliging as to ask me to dinner. Those are holiday occasions, and then I generally walk in the Park. I am a solitary man, and seldom walk with anybody. Not

that I am avoided because I am shabby; for I am not at all shabby, having always a very good suit of black on (or rather Oxford mixture, which has the appearance of black and wears much better); but I have got into a habit of speaking low, and being rather silent, and my spirits are not high, and I am sensible that I am not an attractive companion.

The only exception to this general rule is the child of my first cousin, Little Frank. I have a particular affection for that child, and he takes very kindly to me. He is a diffident boy by nature; and in a crowd he is soon run over, as I may say, and forgotten. He and I, however, get on exceedingly well. I have a fancy that the poor child will in time succeed to my peculiar position in the family. We talk but little; still, we understand each other. We walk about, hand in hand; and without much speaking he knows what I mean, and I know what he means. When he was very little indeed, I used to take him to the windows of the toy-shops, and show him the toys inside. It is surprising how soon he found out that I would have made him a great many presents if I had been in circumstances to do it.

Little Frank and I go and look at the outside of the Monument—he is very fond of the Monument—and at the Bridges, and at all the sights that are free. On two of my birthdays, we have dined on a-la-mode beef, and gone at half-price to the play, and been deeply interested. I was once walking with him in Lombard Street, which we often visit on account of my having mentioned to him that there are great riches there—he is very fond of Lombard Street—when a gentleman said to me as he passed by, “Sir, your little son has dropped his glove.” I assure you, if you will excuse my remarking on so trivial a circumstance, this accidental mention of the child as mine, quite touched my heart and brought the foolish tears into my eyes.

When little Frank is sent to school in the country, I shall be very much at a loss what to do with myself, but I have the intention of walking down there once a month and seeing him on a half holiday. I am told he will then be at play upon the Heath; and if my visits should be objected to, as unsettling the child, I can see him from a distance without his seeing me, and walk back again. His mother comes of a highly genteel family, and rather disapproves, I am aware, of our being too much together. I know that I am not calculated to improve his retiring disposition; but I think he would miss me beyond the feeling of the moment, if we were wholly separated.

When I die in the Clapham Road, I shall not leave much more in this world than I shall take out of it; but, I happen to have a miniature of a “bright-faced boy, with a curling head, and an open shirt-frill waving down his bosom (my mother had it taken for me, but I can’t believe that it was ever like),

which will be worth nothing to sell, and which I shall beg may be given to Frank. I have written my dear boy a little letter with it, in which I have told him that I felt very sorry to part from him, though bound to confess that I knew no reason why I should remain here. I have given him some short advice, the best in my power, to take warning of the consequences of being nobody’s enemy but his own; and I have endeavoured to comfort him for what I fear he will consider a bereavement, by pointing out to him that I was only a superfluous something to every one but him, and that having by some means failed to find a place in this great assembly, I am better out of it.

Such (said the poor relation, clearing his throat and beginning to speak a little louder) is the general impression about me. Now, it is a remarkable circumstance which forms the aim and purpose of my story, that this is all wrong. This is not my life, and these are not my habits. I do not even live in the Clapham Road. Comparatively speaking, I am very seldom there. I reside, mostly, in a—I am almost ashamed to say the word, it sounds so full of pretension—in a Castle. I do not mean that it is an old baronial habitation, but still it is a building always known to every one by the name of a Castle. In it, I preserve the particulars of my history; they run thus:

It was when I first took John Spatter (who had been my clerk) into partnership, and when I was still a young man of not more than five-and-twenty, residing in the house of my uncle Chill from whom I had considerable expectations, that I ventured to propose to Christiana. I had loved Christiana, a long time. She was very beautiful, and very winning in all respects. I rather mistrusted her widowed mother, who I feared was of a plotting and mercenary turn of mind; but, I thought as well of her as I could, for Christiana’s sake. I never had loved any one but Christiana, and she had been all the world, and O far more than all the world, to me, from our childhood!

Christiana accepted me with her mother’s consent,* and I was rendered very happy indeed. My life at my Uncle Chill’s was of a spare dull kind, and my garret chamber was as dull, and bare, and cold, as an upper prison room in some stern northern fortress. But, having Christiana’s love, I wanted nothing upon earth. I would not have changed my lot with any human being.

Avarice was, unhappily, my Uncle Chill’s master-vice. Though he was rich, he pinched, and scraped, and clutched, and lived miserably. As Christiana had no fortune, I was for some time a little fearful of confessing our engagement to him; but, at length I wrote him a letter, saying how it all truly was. I put it into his hand one night, on going to bed.

As I came down stairs next morning, shivering in the cold December air; colder in my uncle’s unwarmed house than in

the street, where the winter sun did sometimes shine, and which was at all events enlivened by cheerful faces and voices passing along; I carried a heavy heart towards the long, low breakfast-room in which my uncle sat. It was a large room with a small fire, and there was a great bay window in it which the rain had marked in the night as if with the tears of houseless people. It stared upon a raw yard, with a cracked stone pavement, and some rusted iron railings half uprooted, whence an ugly out-building that had once been a dissecting-room (in the time of the great surgeon who had mortgaged the house to my uncle), stared at it.

We rose so early always, that at that time of the year we breakfasted by candle-light. When I went into the room, my uncle was so contracted by the cold, and so huddled together in his chair behind the one dim candle, that I did not see him until I was close to the table.

As I held out my hand to him, he caught up his stick (being infirm, he always walked about the house with a stick), and made a blow at me, and said, "You fool!"

"Uncle," I returned, "I didn't expect you to be so angry as this." Nor had I expected it, though he was a hard and angry old man.

"You didn't expect!" said he; "when did you ever expect? When did you ever calculate, or look forward, you contemptible dog?"

"These are hard words, uncle!"

"Hard words? Feathers, to pelt such an idiot as you with," said he. "Here! Betsy Snap! Look at him!"

Betsy Snap was a withered, hard-favored, yellow old woman—our only domestic—always employed, at this time of the morning, in rubbing my uncle's legs. As my uncle adjured her to look at me, he put his lean grip on the crown of her head, she kneeling beside him, and turned her face towards me. An involuntary thought connecting them both with the Dissecting Room, as it must often have been in the surgeon's time, passed across my mind in the midst of my anxiety.

"Look at the snivelling milksop!" said my uncle. "Look at the baby! This is the gentleman who, people say, is nobody's enemy but his own. This is the gentleman who can't say no. This is the gentleman who was making such large profits in his business that he must needs take a partner, to-morrow. This is the gentleman who is going to marry a wife without a penny, and who falls into the hands of Jezebels who are speculating on my death."

I knew, now, how great my uncle's rage was; for nothing short of his being almost beside himself would have induced him to utter that concluding word, which he held in such repugnance that it was never spoken or hinted at before him on any account.

"On my death," he repeated, as if he were defying me by defying his own abhorrence of

the word. "On my death—death—Death! But I'll spoil the speculation. Eat your last under this roof, you feeble wretch, and may it choke you!"

You may suppose that I had not much appetite for the breakfast to which I was bidden in these terms; but, I took my accustomed seat. I saw that I was repudiated henceforth by my uncle; still I could bear that very well, possessing Christiana's heart.

He emptied his basin of bread and milk as usual, only that he took it on his knees with his chair turned away from the table where I sat. When he had done, he carefully snuffed out the candle; and the cold, slate-coloured, miserable day looked in upon us.

"Now, Mr. Michael," said he, "before we part, I should like to have a word with these ladies in your presence."

"As you will, sir," I returned; "but you deceive yourself, and wrong us, cruelly, if you suppose that there is any feeling at stake in this contract but pure, disinterested, faithful love."

To this, he only replied, "You lie!" and not one other word.

We went, through half-thawed snow and half-frozen rain, to the house where Christiana and her mother lived. My uncle knew them very well. They were sitting at their breakfast, and were surprised to see us at that hour.

"Your servant, ma'am," said my uncle, to the mother. "You divine the purpose of my visit, I dare say, ma'am. I understand there is a world of pure, disinterested, faithful love cooped up here. I am happy to bring it all it wants, to make it complete. I bring you your son-in-law, ma'am—and you, your husband, miss. The gentleman is a perfect stranger to me, but I wish him joy of his wise bargain."

He snarled at me as he went out, and I never saw him again.

It is altogether a mistake (continued the poor relation) to suppose that my dear Christiana, over-persuaded and influenced by her mother, married a rich man, the dirt from whose carriage wheels is often, in these changed times, thrown upon me as she rides by. No, no. She married me.

The way we came to be married rather sooner than we intended, was this. I took a frugal lodging and was saving and planning for her sake, when, one day, she spoke to me with great earnestness, and said:

"My dear Michael, I have given you my heart. I have said that I loved you, and I have pledged myself to be your wife. I am as much yours through all changes of good and evil as if we had been married on the day when such words passed between us. I know you well, and know that if we should be separated and our union broken off, your whole life would be shadowed, and all that might, even now, be stronger in your cha-

factor for the conflict with the world would then be weakened to the shadow of what it is!"

"God help me, Christiana!" said I. "You speak the truth."

"Michael!" said she, putting her hand in mine, in all maidenly devotion, "let us keep part no longer. It is but for me to say that can live contented upon such means as you have, and I well know you are happy. I say so from my heart. Strive no more alone; let us strive together. My dear Michael, it is not right that I should keep secret from you what you do not suspect, but what distresses my whole life. My mother: without considering that what you have lost, you have lost for me, and on the assurance of my faith: sets her heart on riches, and urges another suit upon me, to my misery. I cannot bear this, for to bear it is to be untrue to you. I would rather share your struggles than look on. I want no better home than you can give me. I know that you will aspire and labor with a higher courage if I am wholly yours, and let it be so when you will!"

I was blest indeed, that day, and a new world opened to me. We were married in a very little while, and I took my wife to our happy home. That was the beginning of the residence I have spoken of; the Castle we have ever since inhabited together, dates from that time. All our children have been born in it. Our first child—now married—was a little girl, whom we called Christiana. Her son is so like Little Frank, that I hardly know which is which.

The current impression as to my partner's dealings with me is also quite erroneous. He did not begin to treat me coldly, as a poor simpleton, when my uncle and I so fatally quarrelled; nor did he afterwards gradually possess himself of our business and edge me out. On the contrary, he behaved to me with the utmost good faith and honor.

Matters between us, took this turn:—On the day of my separation from my uncle, and even before the arrival at our counting-house of my trunks (which he sent after me, *not* carriage paid), I went down to our room of business, on our little wharf, overlooking the river; and there I told John Spatter what had happened. John did not say, in reply, that rich old relatives were palpable facts, and that love and sentiment were moonshine and fiction. He addressed me thus:

"Michael," said John. "We were at school together, and I generally had the knack of getting on better than you, and making a higher reputation."

"You had, John," I returned.

"Although," said John, "I borrowed your books, and lost them; borrowed your pocket-money, and never repaid it; got you to buy my damaged knives at a higher price than I had given for them new; and to own to the windows that I had broken."

"All not worth mentioning, John Spatter," said I, "but certainly true."

"When you were first established in this infant business, which promises to thrive so well," pursued John, "I came to you, in my search for almost any employment, and you made me your clerk."

"Still not worth mentioning, my dear John Spatter," said I; "still, equally true."

"And finding that I had a good head for business, and that I was really useful to the business, you did not like to retain me in that capacity, and thought it an act of justice soon to make me your partner."

"Still less worth mentioning than any of those other little circumstances you have recalled, John Spatter," said I; "for I was, and am, sensible of your merits and my deficiencies."

"Now my good friend," said John, drawing my arm through his, as he had had a habit of doing at school; while two vessels outside the windows of our counting-house—which were shaped like the stern windows of a ship—went lightly down the river with the tide, as John and I might then be sailing away in company, and in trust and confidence, on our voyage of life; "let there, under these friendly circumstances, be a right understanding between us. You are too easy, Michael. You are nobody's enemy but your own. If I were to give you that damaging character among our connexion, with a shrug, and a shake of the head, and a sigh; and if I were further to abuse the trust you place in me—"

"But you never will abuse it at all, John," I observed.

"Never!" said he, "but I am putting a case—I say, and if I were further to abuse that trust by keeping this piece of our common affairs in the dark, and this other piece in the light, and again this other piece in the twilight, and so on, I should strengthen my strength, and weaken your weakness, day by day, until at last I found myself on the high road to fortune, and you left behind on some bare common, a hopeless number of miles out of the way."

"Exactly so," said I.

"To prevent this, Michael," said John Spatter, "or the remotest chance of this, there must be perfect openness between us. Nothing must be concealed, and we must have but one interest."

"My dear John Spatter," I assured him, "that is precisely what I mean."

"And when you are too easy," pursued John, his face glowing with friendship, "you must allow me to prevent that imperfection in your nature from being taken advantage of, by any one; you must not expect me to humour it—"

"My dear John Spatter," I interrupted, "I don't expect you to humour it. I want to correct it."

"And I, too!" said John.

"Exactly so!" cried I. "We both have the same end in view; and, honorably seeking it, and fully trusting one another, and having but one interest, ours will be a prosperous and happy partnership."

"I am sure of it!" returned John Spatter. And we shook hands most affectionately.

I took John home to my Castle, and we had a very happy day. Our partnership thrived well. My friend and partner supplied what I wanted, as I had foreseen that he would; and by improving both the business and myself, amply acknowledged any little rise in life to which I had helped him.

I am not (said the poor relation, looking at the fire as he slowly rubbed his hands), not very rich, for I never cared to be that; but I have enough, and am above all moderate wants and anxieties. My Castle is not a splendid place, but it is very comfortable, and it has a warm and cheerful air, and is quite a picture of Home.

Our eldest girl, who is very like her mother, married John Spatter's eldest son. Our two families are closely united in other ties of attachment. It is very pleasant on an evening, when we are all assembled together—which frequently happens—and when John and I talk over old times, and the one interest there has always been between us.

I really do not know, in my Castle, what loneliness is. Some of our children or grandchildren are always about it, and the young voices of my descendants are delightful—O, how delightful!—to me to hear. My dearest and most devoted wife, ever faithful, ever loving, ever helpful and sustaining and consoling, is the priceless blessing of my house; from whom all its other blessings spring. We are rather a musical family, and when Christiana sees me, at any time, a little weary or depressed, she steals to the piano and sings a gentle air she used to sing when we were first betrothed. So weak a man am I, that I cannot bear to hear it from any other source. They played it once, at the Theatre, when I was there with Little Frank; and the child said, "wondering, "Cousin Michael, whose hot tears are these that have fallen on my hand!"

Such is my Castle, and such are the real particulars of my life therein preserved. I often take Little Frank home there. He is very welcome to my grandchildren, and they play together. At this time of the year—the Christmas and New Year time—I am seldom out of my Castle. For, the associations of the season seem to hold me there, and the precepts of the season seem to teach me that it is well to be there.

"And the Castle is —" observed a grave, kind voice among the company.

"Yes, My Castle," said the poor relation, shaking his head as he still looked at the fire, "is in the Air. John our esteemed host

suggests its situation accurately. My Castle is in the Air! I have done. Will you be so good as to pass the story."

THE CHILD'S STORY.

ONCE upon a time, a good many years ago, there was a traveller, and he set out upon a journey. It was a magic journey, and was to seem very long when he began it, and very short when he got half way through.

He travelled along a rather dark path for some little time, without meeting anything, until at last he came to a beautiful child. So he said to the child "What do you do here?" And the child said, "I am always at play. Come and play with me!"

So, he played with that child, the whole day long, and they were very merry. The sky was so blue, the sun was so bright, the water was so sparkling, the leaves were so green, the flowers were so lovely, and they heard such singing-birds and saw so many butterflies, that everything was beautiful. This was in fine weather. When it rained, they loved to watch the falling drops, and to smell the fresh scents. When it blew, it was delightful to listen to the wind, and fancy what it said, as it came rushing from its home—where was that, they wondered!—whistling and howling, driving the clouds before it, bending the trees, rumbling in the chimnies, shaking the house, and making the sea roar in fury. But, when it snowed, that was best of all; for, they liked nothing so well as to look up at the white flakes falling fast and thick, like down from the breasts of millions of white birds; and to see how smooth and deep the drift was; and to listen to the hush upon the paths and roads.

They had plenty of the finest toys in the world, and the most astonishing picture-books: all about scimitars and slippers and turbans, and dwarfs and giants and genii and fairies, and blue-beards and bean-stalks and riches and caverns and forests and Valentines and Orsons: and all new and all true.

But, one day, of a sudden, the traveller lost the child. He called to him over and over again, but got no answer. So, he went upon his road, and went on for a little while without meeting anything, until at last he came to a handsome boy. So, he said to the boy, "What do you do here?" And the boy said, "I am always learning. Come and learn with me."

So he learned with that boy about Jupiter and Juno, and the Greeks and the Romans, and I don't know what, and learned more than I could tell—or he either, for he soon forgot a great deal of it. But, they were not always learning; they had the merriest games that ever were played. They rowed upon the river in summer, and skated on the ice in winter; they were active afoot, and active on horseback; at cricket, and all games at ball; at prisoners' base, hare and hounds, follow.

my leader, and more sports than I can think of; nobody could beat them. They had holidays too, and Twelfth cakes, and parties where they danced all night till midnight, and real Theatres where they saw palaces of real gold and silver rise out of the real earth, and saw all the wonders of the world at once. As to friends, they had such dear friends and so many of them, that I want the time to reckon them up. They were all young, like the handsome boy, and were never to be strange to one another all their lives through.

Still, one day, in the midst of all these pleasures, the traveller lost the boy as he had lost the child, and, after calling to him in vain, went on upon his journey. So he went on for a little while without seeing anything, until at last he came to a young man. So, he said to the young man, "What do you do here?" And the young man said, "I am always in love. Come and love with me."

So, he went away with that young man, and presently they came to one of the prettiest girls that ever was seen—just like Fanny in the corner there—and she had eyes like Fanny, and hair like Fanny, and dimples like Fanny's, and she laughed and coloured just as Fanny does while I am talking about her. So, the young man fell in love directly—just as Somebody I won't mention, the first time he came here, did with Fanny. Well! He was teased sometimes—just as Somebody used to be by Fanny; and they quarrelled sometimes—just as Somebody and Fanny used to quarrel; and they made it up, and sat in the dark, and wrote letters every day, and never were happy asunder, and were always looking out for one another and pretending not to, and were engaged at Christmas time, and sat close to one another by the fire, and were going to be married very soon—all exactly like Somebody I won't mention, and Fanny!

But, the traveller lost them one day, as he had lost the rest of his friends, and, after calling to them to come back, which they never did, went on upon his journey. So, he went on for a little while without seeing anything, until at last he came to a middle-aged gentleman. So, he said to the gentleman, "What are you doing here?" And his answer was, "I am always busy. Come and be busy with me!"

So, he began to be very busy with that gentleman, and they went on through the wood together. The whole journey was through a wood, only it had been open and green at first, like a wood in spring; and now began to be thick and dark, like a wood in Summer; some of the little trees that had come out earliest, were even turning brown. The gentleman was not alone, but had a lady of about the same age with him, who was his wife; and they had children, who were with them too. So, they all went on together through the wood, cutting down the trees, and making a path through the branches, and the

fallen leaves, and carrying burdens, and working hard.

Sometimes, they came to a long green avenue that opened into deeper woods. Then they would hear a very little distant voice crying, "Father, father, I am another child! Stop for me!" And presently they would see a very little figure, growing larger as it came along, running to join them. When it came up, they all crowded round it, and kissed and welcomed it; and then they all went on together.

Sometimes, they came to several avenues at once, and then they all stood still, and one of the children said, "Father, I am going to sea," and another said, "Father, I am going to India," and another, "Father, I am going to seek my fortune where I can," and another, "Father, I am going to Heaven!" So, with many tears at parting, they went, solitary, down those avenues, each child upon its way; and the child who went to Heaven, rose into the golden air and vanished.

Whenever these partings happened, the traveller looked at the gentleman, and saw him glance up at the sky above the trees, where the day was beginning to decline, and the sunset to come on. He saw, too, that his hair was turning grey. But, they never could rest long, for they had their journey to perform, and it was necessary for them to be always busy.

At last, there had been so many partings that there were no children left, and only the traveller, the gentleman, and the lady, went upon their way in company. And now the wood was yellow; and now brown; and the leaves, even of the forest trees, began to fall.

So, they came to an avenue that was darker than the rest, and were pressing forward on their journey without looking down it when the lady stopped.

"My husband," said the lady, "I am called."

They listened, and they heard a voice, a long way down the avenue, say, "Mother, mother!"

It was the voice of the first child who had said, "I am going to Heaven!" and the father said, "I pray not yet. The sunset is very near. I pray not yet!"

But, the voice cried "Mother, mother!" without minding him, though his hair was now quite white, and tears were on his face.

Then, the mother, who was already drawn into the shade of the dark avenue and moving away with her arms still round his neck, kissed him, and said "My dearest, I am summoned and I go!" And she was gone. And the traveller and he were left alone together.

And they went on and on together, until they came to very near the end of the wood: so near, that they could see the sunset shining red before them through the trees.

Yet, once more, while he broke his way among the branches, the traveller lost his friend. He called and called, but there was no reply, and when he passed out of the wood, and

saw the peaceful sun going down upon a wide purple prospect, he came to an old man sitting on a fallen tree. So, he said to the old man, "What do you do here?" And the old man said with a calm smile, "I am always remembering. Come and remember with me!"

So, the traveller sat down by the side of that old man, face to face with the serene sunset; and all his friends came softly back and stood around him. The beautiful child, the handsome boy, the young man in love, the father, mother, and children: every one of them was there, and he had lost nothing. So, he loved them all, and was kind and forbearing with them all, and was always pleased to watch them all, and they all honored and loved him. And I think the traveller must be yourself, dear Grandfather, because this is what you do to us, and what we do to you.

SOMEBODY'S STORY.

A WHOLE year of Christmas days have come and passed, since a wealthy tun-maker, named Jacob Elsen, was chosen Syndic of the Corporation of tun-makers, in the town of Stromthal, in Southern Germany. His family name is not to be met with, perhaps, anywhere now. The town itself is gone. The inhabitants once unjustly taxed the Jews who dwelt there, with the murder of some little children, and drove them out; forbidding any Jew to enter their gates again. But the Jews took their quiet revenge; for they built another town, at a distance, and carried all the trade away, so that the new town gradually increased in wealth, while the old town dwindled to nothing.

But, Jacob Elsen had no knowledge of this persecution. In his time, Jews walked about the sombre, winding streets, and traded in the market-place, and kept shops, and enjoyed with others the privileges of the town.

A river flows through the town, a narrow winding stream, navigable for small craft, and called the "Klar." This river, being of very pure sweet water, and moreover very useful for the commerce of the town, the people call their great friend. They believe that it will heal ills of mind and body; and although many afflicted persons have dipped in it, and drunk of the water, without feeling much the better for it, their belief remains the same. They give it feminine names, as if it were a beautiful woman or a goddess. They have innumerable songs and stories about it, which the people knew by heart; or did in Jacob Elsen's time—for there were very few books and fewer readers there, in those days. They have a yearly festival, called the "Klarfuss-day," when flowers and ribbons are cast into the stream, and float away through the meadows towards the great river.

"Is not the Klar," said one of their old songs, "a marvel among rivers? Lo, all

other streams are nourished, drop by drop, with dews and rains; but the Klar comes forth, full grown, from the hills." And this, indeed, was no invention of the poet; for no one knew the source of this river. The Town Council had offered a reward of five hundred gold gulden to any one who could discover it; but all those who had endeavoured to trace it, had come to a place, many leagues above Stromthal, where the stream wound between steep rocks; and, where the current was so strong that neither oar nor sail could prevail against it. Beyond those rocks were the mountains called the Himmelgebirge; and the Klar was supposed to rise in some of those inaccessible regions.

But, though the people of Stromthal honoured their river, they loved their commerce better. Therefore, they made no public walks along its banks; but built their houses, mostly, to the water's brink on both sides. Some, indeed, in the outskirts, had gardens; but, in the centre of the town, the stream caught no shadows, except from warehouses and the overhanging fronts of ancient wooden houses. Jacob Elsen's house was one of these. The sides of the bank before it had been lined with birch-stakes, and the foundation was dug so close to the water, that you might open the door of his workshop, and dip a pitcher in the stream.

Jacob Elsen's household consisted of only three persons besides himself; namely, his daughter, Margaret; his apprentice, Carl; and one old servant woman. He had workmen; but they did not sleep in the house. Carl was a youth of eighteen, and, his master's daughter being a little younger, he fell in love with her—as all apprentices did in those days. Carl's love for Margaret was pure and deep. Jacob knew this; but he said nothing. He had faith in Margaret's prudence.

Whether Margaret loved Carl at this time, none ever knew but herself. He went to church with her on Sundays; and there, while the prayers that were said were sometimes mere meaningless sounds to him, through his thinking of her, and watching her, he could hear her devoutly murmuring the words; or, when the preacher was speaking, he saw her face turned towards him, and felt almost vexed to see that she was listening attentively. She could sit at table with him, and be quite calm, when he felt confused and awkward; at other times she seemed always too busy to think of him. At length, his apprenticeship being completed; the time came for his leaving Elsen's house to travel, as German workmen are bound by their trade-laws to do, and he determined to speak boldly to Margaret before he went. What better time could he have found for this, than a summer evening, when Margaret happened to come into the workshop, after his fellow-workmen were gone? He called her to the door that opened on the river, to look out at the sunset, and he talked about the river, and the mystery of

its source; when it was getting dusk, and he could delay no longer, he told her his secret; and Margaret told him in return her secret; which was, that she loved him too. "But," said she, "I must tell my father this."

That night, after supper, they told Jacob Elsen what had passed between them. Jacob was a man in the prime of life. He was not avaricious, but he was prudent in all things. "Let Carl," he said, "come back after his *Wanderzeit* is ended, with fifty gold gulden; and then, if you are willing to marry him, I will make him a master tun-maker." Carl asked no more than this. He did not doubt of being able to bring back that sum, and he knew that the law would not allow him to marry until his apprenticeship was ended. He was anxious to be gone. On the morrow he took his leave of Margaret,—early in the morning, before anything was stirring in the streets. Carl was full of hope, but Margaret wept as they stood upon the threshold. "Three years," she said, "will sometimes work such changes in us that we are not like our former selves."

"And yet they will only make me love you more," replied Carl.

"You will meet with fairer women than I, where you are going," said Margaret, "and I shall be thinking of you at home, long after you have forgotten me."

"Now, I am sure you love me, Margaret," he said, delighted; "but you must not have doubts of me while I am away. As surely as I love you now, I will come back with the fifty gold gulden, and claim your father's promise."

Margaret lingered at the door, and Carl looked back many times till he turned an angle of the street. His heart was light enough in spite of their separation, for he had always looked forward to this journey as the means of winning her hand; and every step he took seemed to bring him nearer to his object. "I must not lose time," thought he, "and yet it would be a great thing if I could find the head of our river. My way lies southward: I will try!" On the third day he took a boat at a little village and pulled against the stream; but, in the afternoon, he drew near the rocks, and the current became stronger. He pulled on, however, till the steep grey walls were on each side of him, and looking up he saw only a strip of sky; but at length, with all the strength of his arms, he could only keep the boat where it was. Now and then, with a sudden effort, he advanced a few yards, but he could not maintain the place he had won, and after a while he grew weary, and was obliged to give it up and drift back again. "So, what has been said about the rocks and the strength of the water is true," thought he; "I can testify to that at least."

Carl wandered for many days before he got employment; and, when he did, it was poorly paid, and scarcely sufficed for his living; so

he was obliged to depart again. When half his term was completed he had scarcely saved ten "gold gulden," though he had walked hundreds of miles and worked in many cities. One day he set out again, to seek for employment elsewhere. When he had been walking several days, he came to a small town on the bank of a river, whose waters were so bright that they reminded him of the Klar. The town, too, was so like Stromthal that he could almost fancy that he had made a great circuit and come back to his starting place again. But Carl did not want to go home yet. His term was only half expired, and his ten gold gulden (one of which was already nibbled in travelling), would make a poor figure after his boast of returning with fifty. His heart was not so light as when he quitted Margaret at the door of her father's house. He had found the world different from his expectations of it. The harshness of strangers had soured him, and there was no pleasure that day in being reminded of his native town. If he had not been weary he would have turned aside and gone upon his journey without stopping; but it was evening, and he wanted some refreshment.

He walked through straggling streets that reminded him still further of his home, until he came to the market-place, in the midst of which stood a large white statue of a woman. She held an olive branch in her hand: her head was bare, but folds of drapery enveloped her, from the waist to the feet. "Whose is this statue," asked Carl of a bystander? The man answered in a strange dialect, but Carl understood him.

"It is the statue of our river," he answered.

"What is your river called?"

"The Geber: for it enriches the town, enabling us to trade with many great cities."

"And why is the head of the woman bare while her feet are hidden?"

"Because we know where the river rises; but, whither it flows none know."

"Can no one float down with the current and see?"

"It is dangerous to search; the stream grows swifter, running between high rocks, until it rushes into a deep cavern, and is lost."

"How strange," thought Carl, "that this town should be, in so many respects, so like my own!" But a little further on in a narrow street, he found a wooden house with a small tun hanging over the doorway, by way of sign, so like Jacob Elsen's house, that if the words "Peter Schönfuss, tun-maker to the Duke," had not been written above the door, he would have thought it magic. Carl knocked here, and a young woman came to the door; here the likeness ended, for Carl saw at a glance that Margaret was a hundred times more beautiful than she.

"I do not know whether my father wants workmen," said the young woman; "but if you are a traveller, you can rest, and refresh yourself until he comes in."

Carl thanked her, and entered. The low-roofed kitchen, so like Elsen's house, did not surprise him; for most rooms were built thus at that time. The girl spread a white cloth, gave him some cold meat and bread, and brought him some water to wash; but, while he was eating she asked him many questions, concerning whence he came, and where he had been. She had never heard of Stromthal, for she knew nothing of the country beyond the "Hirnselgebirge." When her father came in, Carl saw that he was much older than Jacob Elsen.

"And so you want employment?" said the father.

Carl bowed, standing with his cap in his hand.

"Follow me!" The old man led the way into the workshop—through the door of which, at the bottom, Carl saw the river—and putting the tools into Carl's hand, bade him continue the work of a half-finished tun. Carl handled his tools so skilfully, that the old man knew him at once to be a good workman, and offered him better wages than he had ever got before. Carl remained here until his three years had expired. One day he said to Bertha Schönfuss (his master's daughter), "My time is up now, Bertha; to-morrow I set out for my home."

"I will pray for a happy journey for you," said Bertha; "and that you may find joy at home."

"Look you, Bertha," said Carl; "I have seventy gold gulden, which I have saved. Without these, I could not have gone home, or married my Margaret, of whom I have told you; and, but for you, I should not have had them. Ought I not to remember you gratefully, while I live?"

"And come back to see us one day?" said Bertha. "Of course you ought."

"I surely will," said Carl, tying his money in the corner of a handkerchief.

"Stay!" cried Bertha. "There is danger in carrying much money in these parts. The roads are infested with robbers."

"I will make a box for the money," said Carl.

"No; put them in the hollow handle of one of your tools. It is natural for a workman to carry tools. No one will think of looking there."

"No handle would hold them," replied Carl. "I will make a hollow mallet, and put them in the body of it."

"A good thought," said Bertha.

Carl worked the next day, and made a large mallet, in which he plugged a hole, letting in fifty gold pieces, he retained the remainder of his treasure to expend on his journey, and to buy clothes and other things; for he could afford to be extravagant now. When everything was ready, he hired a boat to travel down the river, a portion of his journey. The old man bade him farewell affectionately, at the landing-place of his own workshop;

and Carl kissed Bertha, and Bertha bade him take care of his mallet.

The boy who rowed the boat, was the ugliest boy that could possibly be. He was very short in the legs, and very broad in the chest, and he had scarcely any neck; but his face was large and round, and he had two small, twinkling eyes. His hair was black and straight; and his arms were long, like the arms of an ape. Carl did not like the look of him when he hired the boat, and was about to choose another from the crowd of boatmen at the landing-place, when he thought how unjust it was to refuse to give the boy work on account of his ugliness, and so turned back and hired him.

Carl sat at the stern, and the boy rowed, bending forward until his face nearly touched his feet, and then throwing himself almost flat upon his back, and taking such pulls with his long arms, that the boat flew onward like a crow. Carl did not rebuke him, for he was too anxious to get home. But the boy grew bolder from his license. He made horrible grimaces when he passed other boats, tempting the rowers to throw things at him. He raised his oars sometimes, and struck at a fish playing on the surface; and, each time, Carl saw the dead fish lying on its back on the top of the water. Carl commanded the horrible boy to row on and be quiet—but he replied in an uncouth dialect which Carl could scarcely understand; and a moment after began his tricks again. Once, Carl saw him, to his astonishment, spring from his seat, and run along the narrow gunwale of the boat; but his naked feet clung to the edge, as if he had been web-footed.

"Sit to your oars, Monkey!" cried Carl, striking him a light blow.

The boy sat down sullenly and rowed on, playing no more tricks that day. Carl sang one of the songs about the "Klar;" and the boat continued its way—through meadows, where the banks were lined with bulrushes, and often round little islands—till the dusk came down from Heaven. The river-surface glimmered with a faint white light. The trees upon the bank grew blacker, and the stars spread westward. Carl watched the fish, making circles on the stream, and let his hand fall over the side to feel the water rippling through his fingers as the boat went on. But growing weary after awhile, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and placing his mallet beside him, lay down in the stern, and fell asleep. The town where they were to stop that night, was further off than they had thought it. Carl slept a long time and dreamed. But, in his sleep, he heard a noise close to his head, like a splash in the water, and awoke. He thought, at first, that the boy had fallen in the river; but he saw him standing up, midway, in the boat.

"What is the matter?" said Carl.

"I have dropped your hammer in the stream," said the boy.

"Wretch!" cried Carl, springing up; "how was this?"

"Spare me, my master," said the boy with an ugly grin. "It flew out of my hand as I tried to strike a flying bat." Carl was furious. He struck at him several times; but the boy avoided him, slipping under his arm, and running again along the gunwale. Carl became still more furious, and fell upon him once, so violently, that the boat overturned, and they both fell into the river. And now, Carl finding that the boy could not swim, thought no more of his mallet but grasped him, and struck out for the bank. The current was strong, and carried them far down; but they came ashore at last. They could see the lights of the town near at hand, and Carl walked on sullenly, bidding the boy follow him. When they came near the town gate, he turned and found that the boy was gone. He called to him, and turned back a little way, and called again; but he had no answer; and at last he walked on, and saw the boy no more.

Carl could not sleep that night. At daylight, he offered nearly all the money he had retained, for a boat, and set out alone down the river. He thought that his mallet must have floated, in spite of the weight of the gold pieces, and he hoped to overtake it. But though he looked every way as he went along, and though he rowed on all day without resting, he saw nothing of it. He passed no more islands. The banks became very desolate and lonely. The wind dropped. The water was dark, as if a thunder-cloud hung over it. And now the stream ran swifter, winding between rocks like the Klar. The wall on each side became higher and higher, and the boat went on faster and faster, so that he seemed to be sinking into the earth, until he caught sight of the entrance to the cavern, of which the stranger had spoken to him; and at the same moment he espied his mallet floating on a few yards in advance. But the boat began to spin round and round in an eddy, and he felt sick. He saw the mallet float into the cavern; when the boat came to the mouth, he caught at the sides and stopped it. Peering into the darkness, he saw small flashes of light floating in the gloom; he could see nothing else; and there was a great roar and rushing of water. He was obliged to give up the pursuit; but it was not easy to go back against the stream, as the oars would not help him to stem the current. He kept close to the side, however, where the stream was weaker, and urged his way along, by clutching at ledges and sharp corners in the rock. In this way, he moved on slowly all night; and, a little after dawn, got again above the rocks, and went ashore. He was very weak and tired. He flung himself upon the hard ground and slept. When he awoke, he ate a small loaf which he had brought with him, and went on his way.

Carl wandered, for many a day, in those

desolate regions, and passed many forests, and crossed rivers, and wore out his shoes, before he found his way back to Stromthal. His heart failed him when he came to the dear old town. He was tempted to go back for another three years, but he could not make up his mind to turn away without seeing Margaret; "and besides," thought he, "Jacob Elsen is a good man. When he hears that I have worked, and earned this money, though I have it no longer, he will give me his daughter."

He wandered about the streets, a long time and saw many persons whom he knew, but who had forgotten him. At last he turned boldly into the street where Jacob lived, and knocked at his old home. Jacob came to the door himself.

"The 'Wanderbursche' is come home," cried Jacob, embracing him. "Margaret's heart will be glad."

Carl followed the tun-maker in silence. He felt as if he had been guilty of some bad action. He scarcely knew how to begin the story of his lost mallet.

"How thin and pale you are!" said Jacob. "I hope you have led a strict life? But these fine clothes—they hardly suit a young workman. You must have found a treasure."

"Nay," replied Carl. "I have lost all; even the fifty gold-gulden that I had earned by the work of my hands."

The old man's face darkened. Carl's haggard look, his fine apparel, all travel-soiled, and his confusion and silence, awakened his suspicions. When Carl told his story, it seemed so strange and improbable, that he shook his head.

"Carl," he said, "you have dwelt in evil cities. Would to Heaven you had died when you first learnt to shave the staves, rather than have lived to be a liar!"

Carl made no answer; he turned away to go out into the street again. On the threshold he met Margaret. He did not speak to her, but passed on, leaving her staring after him in astonishment. All night long, he walked about the streets of the town. He thought of going back to the house of old Peter Schönfuss and his daughter Bertha; but, his pride restrained him. He resolved to go away and seek work again, somewhere at a distance. But his unkindness to Margaret smote him; and he wished to see her again before he went. He lingered in the street after daylight, until he saw her open the door; then he went up to her.

"O Carl!" said Margaret, "this then is what I have for three long years looked forward to!"

"Listen to me, Margaret dear!" urged Carl.

"I dare not," said Margaret. "My father has forbidden me. I can only bid you farewell, and pray that my father may find, one day, he is wrong."

"I have told him only the truth," cried Carl; but Margaret went in, and left him

there Carl waited a moment, and then determined to follow her, and entreat her to believe in his innocence before he departed. He lifted the latch and entered the house, passing through the kitchen into the yard; but Margaret was not there. He went into the workshop and found himself alone there; for the workmen had not come yet, and Margaret was the first person up in the house. His misfortunes, and the injustice he had experienced, came into his mind, as if some voice were whispering in his ear: the whole world seemed to be against him. "I cannot bear this," he said. "I must die!"

He unlatched the wooden bar, and threw open the doors, letting the light of day into the dusky shop. It was a clear fresh morning, and the river, brimming with the rains of the day before, flowed on, smooth and flush to the edge. "Of all my hopes, my patience, my industry, my long sufferings, and my deep love for Margaret, behold the miserable end!" said Carl.

But he stopped suddenly; his eye had caught some object, in between the birch stakes and the bank. "Strange," he said, "It is a mallet, and much like the one I lost! Some of Jacob Elsen's workmen have dropped a mallet here, surely." But it was larger than an ordinary mallet, and, though it was madness to fancy so, he thought that some supernatural power had brought his mallet there, in time to turn him from his purpose. "It is my mallet!" he cried; for by stooping down he could see the mark of the hole he had plugged. He did not wait to take it up, it being safe for awhile where it was: he ran back into the house, and met Jacob Elsen descending the stairs.

"I have found my mallet," said Carl; "Where is Margaret?"

The tun-maker looked incredulous. Margaret heard his call, and came down stairs.

"This way!" said Carl, leading them through the shop. "Look there!" Both Margaret and her father saw it. Carl stooped and picked it up, and, taking the plug out, shook all the gold pieces on the ground. Jacob shook his hand, and begged him to pardon him for his unjust suspicions; and Margaret wept tears of joy. "It came just in time to save my life," said Carl. "Happy days will come with it."

"But, how did this mallet arrive here?" said Jacob, pondering.

"I guess," replied Carl, "I have found the origin of the Klar. The two rivers are, in truth, but one."

Carl wrote the story of his adventures, and presented it to the Town Council, who employed all the scholars in Stromthal to prove by experiments the identity of the two rivers. When they had done this, there was great rejoicing in the town. On the day when Carl married Margaret, he received the promised reward of five hundred gold gulden: and thenceforth the day on which he found

his mallet was set apart for a festival by the inhabitants of all the towns, both on the "Geber" and the "Klar."

THE OLD NURSE'S STORY.

You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; and I dare say you have heard that your grandfather was a clergyman up in Westmoreland, where I come from. I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nurse-maid; and mighty proud I was, I can tell ye, when the mistress called me up, and spoke to my being a good girl at my needle, and a steady honest girl, and one whose parents were very respectable, though they might be poor. I thought I should like nothing better than to serve the pretty young lady, who was blushing as deep as I was, as she spoke of the coming baby, and what I should have to do with it. However, I see you don't care so much for this part of my story, as for what you think is to come, so I'll tell you at once I was engaged, and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond (that was the baby, who is now your mother) was born. To be sure, I had little enough to do with her when she came, for she was never out of her mother's arms, and slept by her all night long; and proud enough was I sometimes when missis trusted her to me. There never was such a baby before or since, though you've all of you been fine enough in your turns; but for sweet winning ways, you're none of you come up to your mother. She took after her mother, who was a real lady born; a Miss Furnivall, a granddaughter of Lord Furnivall's in Northumberland. I believe she had neither brother nor sister, and had been brought up in my lord's family till she had married your grandfather, who was just a curate, son to a shopkeeper in Carlisle—but a clever fine gentleman as ever was—and one who was a right-down hard worker in his parish, which was very wide, and scattered all abroad over the Westmoreland Fells. When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was about four or five years old, both her parents died in a fortnight—one after the other. Ah! that was a sad time. My pretty young mistress and me was looking for another baby, when my master came home from one of his long rides, wet and tired, and took the fever he died of; and then she never held up her head again, but just lived to see her dead baby, and have it laid on her breast before she sighed away her life. My mistress had asked me, on her death-bed, never to leave Miss Rosamond; but if she had never spoken a word, I would have gone with the little child to the end of the world.

The next thing, and before we had well stilled our sobs, the executors and guardians

came to settle the affairs. They were my poor young mistress's own cousin, Lord Furnivall, and Mr. Esthwaite, my master's brother, a shopkeeper in Manchester; not so well to do then, as he was afterwards, and with a large family rising about him. Well! I don't know if it were their settling, or because of a letter my mistress wrote on her death-bed to her cousin, my lord; but somehow it was settled that Miss Rosamond and me were to go to Furnivall Manor House, in Northumberland, and my lord spoke as if it had been her mother's wish that she should live with his family, and as if he had no objections, for that one or two more or less could make no difference in so grand a household. So, though that was not the way in which I should have wished the coming of my bright and pretty pet to have been looked at—who was like a sunbeam in any family, be it never so grand—I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady's maid at my Lord Furnivall's at Furnivall Manor.

But I made a mistake in thinking we were to go and live where my lord did. It turned out that the family had left Furnivall Manor House fifty years or more. I could not hear that my poor young mistress had ever been there, though she had been brought up in the family; and I was sorry for that, for I should have liked Miss Rosamond's youth to have passed where her mother's had been.

My lord's gentleman, from whom I asked as many questions as I durst, said that the Manor House was at the foot of the Cumberland Fells, and a very grand place; that an old Miss Furnivall, a great-aunt of my lord's, lived there, with only a few servants; but that it was a very healthy place, and my lord had thought that it would suit Miss Rosamond very well for a few years, and that her being there might perhaps amuse his old nunt.

I was bidden by my lord to have Miss Rosamond's things ready by a certain day. He was a stern, proud man, as they say all the Lord Furnivalls were; and he never spoke a word more than was necessary. Folk did say he had loved my young mistress; but that, because she knew that his father would object, she would never lister to him, and married Mr. Esthwaite; but I don't know. He never married at any rate. But he never took much notice of Miss Rosamond; which I thought he might have done if he had cared for her dead mother. He sent his gentleman with us to the Manor House, telling him to join him at Newcastle that same evening; so there was no great length of time for him to make us known to all the strangers before he, too, shook us off; and we were left, two lonely young things (I was not eighteen), in the great old Manor House. It seems like yesterday that we drove there. We had left our own dear parsonage very early, and we had both cried as if our hearts would

break, though we were travelling in my lord's carriage, which I had thought so much of once. And now it was long past noon on a September day, and we stopped to change horses for the last time at a little smoky town, all full of colliers and miners. Miss Rosamond had fallen asleep, but Mr. Henry told me to waken her, that she might see the park and the Manor House as we drove up. I thought it rather a pity; but I did what he bade me, for fear he should complain of me to my lord. We had left all signs of a town or even a village, and were then inside the gates of a large wild park—not like the parks here in the south, but with rocks, and the noise of running water, and gnarled thorn-trees, and old oaks, all white and peeled with age.

The road went up about two miles, and then we saw a great and stately house, with many trees close around it, so close that in some places their branches dragged against the walls when the wind blew; and some hung broken down; for no one seemed to take much charge of the place;—to lop the wood, or to keep the moss-covered carriage-way in order. Only in front of the house all was clear. The great oval drive was without a weed; and neither tree nor creeper was allowed to grow over the long, many-windowed front; at both sides of which a wing projected, which were each the ends of other side fronts; for the house, although it was so desolate, was even grander than I expected. Behind it rose the Fells, which seemed unenclosed and bare enough; and on the left hand of the house as you stood facing it, was a little old-fashioned flower-garden, as I found out afterwards. A door opened out upon it from the west front; it had been scooped out of the thick dark wood for some old Lady Furnivall; but the branches of the great forest trees had grown and overshadowed it again, and there were very few flowers that would live there at that time.

When we drove up to the great front entrance, and went into the hall I thought we should be lost—it was so large, and vast, and grand. There was a chandelier all of bronze, hung down from the middle of the ceiling; and I had never seen one before, and looked at it all in amaze. Then, at one end of the hall, was a great fire-place, as large as the sides of the houses in my country, with massy andirons and dogs to hold the wood; and by it were heavy old-fashioned sofas. At the opposite end of the hall, to the left as you went in—on the western side—was an organ built into the wall, and so large that it filled up the best part of that end. Beyond it, on the same side, was a door; and opposite, on each side of the fire-place, were also doors leading to the east front; but those I never went through as long as I stayed in the house, so I can't tell you what lay beyond.

The afternoon was closing in, and the hall, which had no fire lighted in it, looked dark and

gloom; but we did not stay there a moment. The old servant who had opened the door for us bowed to Mr. Henry, and took us in through the door at the further side of the great organ, and led us through several smaller halls and passages into the west drawing-room, where he said that Miss Furnivall was sitting. Poor little Miss Rosamond held very tight to me, as if she were scared and lost in that great place, and, as for myself, I was not much better. The west drawing-room was very cheerful-looking, with a warm fire in it, and plenty of good comfortable furniture about. Miss Furnivall was an old lady not far from eighty, I should think, but I do not know. She was thin and tall, and had a face as full of fine wrinkles as if they had been drawn all over it with a needle's point. Her eyes were very watchful, to make up, I suppose, for her being so deaf as to be obliged to use a trumpet. Sitting with her, working at the same great piece of tapestry, was Mrs. Stark, her maid and companion, and almost as old as she was. She had lived with Miss Furnivall ever since they both were young, and now she seemed more like a friend than a servant; she looked so cold and grey, and stony, as if she had never loved or cared for any one; and I don't suppose she did care for any one, except her mistress; and, owing to the great deafness of the latter, Mrs. Stark treated her very much as if she were a child. Mr. Henry gave some message from my lord, and then he bowed good-bye to us all,—taking no notice of my sweet little Miss Rosamond's out-stretched hand—and left us standing there, being looked at by the two old ladies through their spectacles.

I was right glad when they rung for the old footman who had shown us in at first, and told him to take us to our rooms. So we went out of that great drawing-room, and into another sitting-room, and out of that, and then up a great flight of stairs, and along a broad gallery—which was something like a library, having books all down one side, and windows and writing-tables all down the other—till we came to our rooms, which I was not sorry to hear were just over the kitchens; for I began to think I should be lost in that wilderness of a house. There was an old nursery, that had been used for all the little lords and ladies long ago, with a pleasant fire burning in the grate, and the kettle boiling on the hob, and tea things spread out on the table; and out of that room was the night-nursery, with a little crib for Miss Rosamond close to my bed. And old James called up Dorothy, his wife, to bid us welcome; and both he and she were so hospitable and kind, that by-and-by Miss Rosamond and me felt quite at home; and by the time tea was over, she was sitting on Dorothy's knee, and chattering away as fast as her little tongue could go. I soon found out that Dorothy was from Westmoreland, and that bound her and me together, as it were; and I would never wish to meet with

kinder people than were old James and his wife. James had lived pretty nearly all his life in my lord's family, and thought there was no one so grand as they. He even looked down a little on his wife; because, till he had married her, she had never lived in any but a farmer's household. But he was very fond of her, as well he might be. They had one servant under them, to do all the rough work. Agnes they called her; and she and me, and James and Dorothy, with Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, made up the family; always remembering my sweet little Miss Rosamond! I used to wonder what they had done before she came, they thought so much of her now. Kitchen and drawing-room, it was all the same. The hard, sad Miss Furnivall, and the cold Mrs. Stark, looked pleased when she came fluttering in like a bird, playing and pranking hither and thither, with a continual murmur, and pretty prattle of gladness. I am sure, they were sorry many a time when she flitted away into the kitchen, though they were too proud to ask her to stay with them, and were a little surprised at her taste; though, to be sure, as Mrs. Stark said, it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of. The great, old rambling house, was a famous place for little Miss Rosamond. She made expeditions all over it, with me at her heels; all, except the east wing, which was never opened, and whither we never thought of going. But in the western and northern part was many a pleasant room; full of things that were curiosities to us, though they might not have been to people who had seen more. The windows were darkened by the sweeping boughs of the trees, and the ivy which had overgrown them; but, in the green gloom, we could manage to see old China jars and carved ivory boxes, and great heavy books, and, above all, the old pictures!

Once, I remember, my darling would have Dorothy go with us to tell us who they all were; for they were all portraits of some of my lord's family, though Dorothy could not tell us the names of every one. We had gone through most of the rooms, when we came to the old state drawing-room over the hall, and there was a picture of Miss Furnivall; or, as she was called in those days, Miss Grace, for she was the younger sister. Such a beauty she must have been! but with such a set, proud look, and such scorn looking out of her handsome eyes, with her eyebrows just a little raised, as if she wondered how any one could have the impertinence to look at her; and her lip curled at us, as we stood there gazing. She had a dress on, the like of, which I had never seen before, but it was all the fashion when she was young; a hat of some soft white stuff like beaver, pulled a little over her brows, and a beautiful plume of feathers sweeping round it on one side; and her gown of blue satin was open in front to a quilted white stomacher.

"Well, to be sure!" said I, when I had gazed my fill. "Flesh is grass, they do say; but who would have thought that Miss Furnivall had been such an out-and-out beauty, to see her now!"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "Folks change sadly. But if what my master's father used to say was true, Miss Furnivall, the elder sister, was handsomer than Miss Grace. Her picture is here somewhere; but, if I show it you, you must never let on, even to James, that you have seen it. Can the little lady hold her tongue, think you?" asked she.

I was not so sure, for she was such a little sweet, bold, open-spoken child, so I set her to hide herself; and then I helped Dorothy to turn a great picture, that leaned with its face towards the wall, and was not hung up as the others were. To be sure, it beat Miss Grace for beauty; and, I think, for scornful pride, too, though in that matter it might be hard to choose. I could have looked at it an hour, but Dorothy seemed half frightened of having shown it to me, and hurried it back again, and bade me run and find Miss Rosamond, for that there were some ugly places about the house, where she should like ill for the child to go. I was a brave, high-spirited girl, and thought little of what the old woman said, for I liked hide-and-seek as well as any child in the parish; so off I ran to find my little one.

As winter drew on, and the days grew shorter, I was sometimes almost certain that I heard a noise as if some one was playing on the great organ in the hall. I did not hear it every evening; but, certainly, I did very often; usually when I was sitting with Miss Rosamond, after I had put her to bed, and keeping quite still and silent in the bedroom. Then I used to hear it booming and swelling away in the distance. The first night, when I went down to my supper, I asked Dorothy who had been playing music, and James said very shortly that I was a gawk to take the wind souging among the trees for music; but I saw Dorothy look at him very fearfully, and Bessy, the kitchen-maid, said something beneath her breath, and went quite white. I saw they did not like my question, so I held my peace till I was with Dorothy alone, when I knew I could get a good deal out of her. So, the next day, I watched my time, and I coaxed and asked her who it was that played the organ; for I knew that it was the organ and not the wind well enough, for all I had kept silence before James. But Dorothy had had her lesson, I'll warrant, and never a word could I get from her. So then I tried Bessy, though I had always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and, if, I ever told, I was never to say *she* had told me; but it was a very strange noise, and she had heard it many a time, but most of all on

winter nights, and before storms; and folks did say, it was the old lord playing on the great organ in the hall, just as he used to do when he was alive; but who the old lord was or why he played, and why he played on stormy winter evenings in particular, she either could not or would not tell me. Well! I told you I had a brave heart; and I thought it was rather pleasant to have that grand music rolling about the house, let who would be the player; for now it rose above the great gusts of wind, and wailed and triumphed just like a living creature, and then it fell to a softness most complete; only it was always music and tunes, so it was nonsense to call it the wind. I thought, at first, it might be Miss Furnivall who played, unknown to Bessy; but, one day when I was in the hall by myself, I opened the organ and peeped all about it, and around it, as I had done to the organ in Crosthwaite Church once before, and I saw it was all broken and destroyed inside, though it looked so brave and fine; and then, though it was noon-day, my flesh began to creep a little, and I shut it up, and ran away pretty quickly to my own bright nursery; and I did not like hearing the music for some time after that, any more than James and Dorothy did. All this time Miss Rosamond was making herself more and more beloved. The old ladies liked her to dine with them at their early dinner; James stood behind Miss Furnivall's chair and I behind Miss Rosamond's, all in state; and, after dinner, she would play about in a corner of the great drawing-room, as still as any mouse, while Miss Furnivall slept, and I had my dinner in the kitchen. But she was glad enough to come to me in the nursery afterwards; for, as she said, Miss Furnivall was so sad, and Mrs. Stark so dull; but she and I were merry enough; and, by-and-by, I got not to care for that weird rolling music, which did one no harm, if we did not know where it came from.

That winter was very cold. In the middle of October the frosts began, and lasted many, many weeks. I remember, one day at dinner, Miss Furnivall lifted up her sad, heavy eyes, and said to Mrs. Stark, "I am afraid we shall have a terrible winter," in a strange kind of meaning way. But Mrs. Stark pretended not to hear, and talked very loud of something else. My little lady and I did not care for the frost;—not we! As long as it was dry we climbed up the steep brows, behind the house, and went up on the Fells, which were bleak and bare enough, and there we ran races in the fresh, sharp air; and once we came down by a new path that took us past the two old gnarled holly-trees, which grew about half-way down by the east side of the house. But the days grew shorter and shorter; and the old lord, if it was he, played away more and more stormily and sadly on the great organ. One Sunday afternoon,—it must have been towards the end of November

—I asked Dorothy to take charge of little Missey when she came out of the drawing-room, after Miss Furnivall had had her nap; for it was too cold to take her with me to church, and yet I wanted to go. And Dorothy was glad enough to promise, and was so fond of the child that all seemed well; and Bessy and I set off very briskly, though the sky hung heavy and black over the white earth, as if the night had never fully gone away; and the air, though still, was very biting and keen.

"We shall have a fall of snow," said Bessy to me. And sure enough, even while we were in church, it came down thick, in great large flakes, so thick it almost darkened the windows. It had stopped snowing before we came out, but it lay soft, thick and deep beneath our feet, as we tramped home. Before we got to the hall the moon rose, and I think it was lighter then,—what with the moon, and what with the white dazzling snow—than it had been when we went to church, between two and three o'clock. I have not told you that Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark never went to church: they used to read the prayers together, in their quiet gloomy way; they seemed to feel the Sunday very long without their tapestry-work to be busy at. So when I went to Dorothy in the kitchen, to fetch Miss Rosamond and take her up-stairs with me, I did not much wonder when the old woman told me that the ladies had kept the child with them, and that she had never come to the kitchen, as I had bidden her, when she was tired of behaving pretty in the drawing-room. So I took off my things and went to find her, and bring her to her supper in the nursery. But when I went into the best drawing-room, there sat the two old ladies, very still and quiet, dropping out a word now and then, but looking as if nothing so bright and merry as Miss Rosamond had ever been near them. Still I thought she might be hiding from me; it was one of her pretty ways; and that she had persuaded them to look as if they knew nothing about her; so I went softly peeping under this sofa, and behind that chair, making believe I was sadly frightened at not finding her.

"What's the matter, Hester?" said Mrs. Stark sharply. I don't know if Miss Furnivall had seen me, for, as I told you, she was very deaf, and she sat quite still, idly staring into the fire, with her hopeless face. "I'm only looking for my little Rosy-Posy," replied I, still thinking that the child was there, and near me, though I could not see her.

"Miss Rosamond is not here," said Mrs. Stark. "She went away more than an hour ago to find Dorothy." And she too turned and went on looking into the fire.

My heart sank at this, and I began to wish I had never left my darling. I went back to Dorothy and told her. James was gone out for the day, but she and me and Bessy took

lights, and went up into the nursery first and then we roamed over the great large house, calling and entreating Miss Rosamond to come out of her hiding place, and not frighten us to death in that way. But there was no answer; no sound.

"Oh!" said I at last, "Can she have got into the east wing and hidden there?"

But Dorothy said it was not possible, for that she herself had never been in there; that the doors were always locked, and my Lord's steward had the keys, she believed; at any rate, neither she nor James had ever seen them: so, I said I would go back and see if, after all, she was not hidden in the drawing-room, unknown to the old ladies; and if I found her there, I said, I would whip her well for the fright she had given me; but I never meant to do it. Well, I went back to the west drawing-room, and I told Mrs. Stark we could not find her anywhere, and asked for leave to look all about the furniture there, for I thought now, that she might have fallen asleep in some warm hidden corner; but no! we looked, Miss Furnivall got up and looked, trembling all over, and she was no where there; then we set off again, every one in the house, and looked in all the places we had searched before, but we could not find her. Miss Furnivall shivered and shook so much, that Mrs. Stark took her back into the warm drawing-room; but not before they had made me promise to bring her to them when she was found. Well-a-day! I began to think she never would be found, when I bethought me to look out into the great front court, all covered with snow. I was up-stairs when I looked out; but, it was such clear moonlight, I could see quite plain two little footprints, which might be traced from the hall door, and round the corner of the east wing. I don't know how I got down, but I tugged open the great, stiff hall door; and, throwing the skirt of my gown over my head for a cloak, I ran out. I turned the east corner, and there a black shadow fell on the snow; but when I came again into the moonlight, there were the little footmarks going up—to the Fells. It was bitter cold; so cold that the air almost took the skin off my face as I ran, but I ran on, crying to think how my poor little darling must be perished and frightened. I was within sight of the holly-trees, when I saw a shepherd coming down the hill, bearing something in his arms wrapped in his maul. He shouted to me, and asked me if I had lost a bairn; and, when I could not speak for crying, he bore towards me, and I saw my wee bairnie lying still, and white, and stiff, in his arms, as if she had been dead. He told me he had been up the Fells to gather in his sheep, before the deep cold of night came on, and that under the holly-trees (black marks on the hill-side, where no other bush was for miles aound) he had found my little lady—my lamb—my queen—my darling—stiff and

cold, in the terrible sleep which is frost-begotten. Oh! the joy, and the tears of having her in my arms once again! for I would not let him carry her; but took her, maud and all, into my own arms, and held her near my own warm neck and heart, and felt the life stealing slowly back again into her little gentle limbs. But she was still insensible when we reached the hall, and I had no breath for speech. We went in by the kitchen door.

"Bring the warming-pan," said I; and I carried her up-stairs and began undressing her by the nursery fire, which Bessy had kept up. I called my little lammie all the sweet and playful names I could think of,—even while my eyes were blinded by my tears; and at last, oh! at length she opened her large blue eyes. Then I put her into her warm bed, and sent Dorothy down to tell Miss Furnivall that all was well; and I made up my mind to sit by my darling's bedside the live-long night. She fell away into a soft sleep as soon as her pretty head had touched the pillow, and I watched by her till morning light; when she wakened up bright and clear—or so I thought at first—and, my dears, so I think now.

She said, that she had fancied that she should like to go to Dorothy, for that both the old ladies were asleep, and it was very dull in the drawing-room; and that, as she was going through the west lobby, she saw the snow through the high window falling—falling—soft and steady; but she wanted to see it lying pretty and white on the ground; so she made her way into the great hall; and then, going to the window, she saw it bright and soft upon the drive; but while she stood there, she saw a little girl, not so old as she was, "but so pretty," said my darling, "and this little girl beckoned to me to come out; and oh, she was so pretty and so sweet, I could not choose but go." And then this other little girl had taken her by the hand, and side by side the two had gone round the east corner.

"Now you are a naughty little girl, and telling stories," said I. "What would your good mamma, that is in heaven, and never told a story in her life, say to her little Rosamond, if she heard her—and I dare say she does—telling stories!"

"Indeed, Hester," sobbed out my child; "I'm telling you true. Indeed I am."

"Don't tell me!" said I, very stern. "I tracked you by your foot-marks through the snow; there were only yours to be seen: and if you had had a little girl to go hand-in-hand with you up the hill, don't you think the foot-prints would have gone along with yours?"

"I can't help it, dear, dear Hester," said she, crying, "if they did not; I never looked at her feet, but she held my hand fast and tight in her little one, and it was very, very

cold. She took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep; and that's all, Hester—but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is," said she, crying. "So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story—over and over again, and always the same. At last Dorothy knocked at the door with Miss Rosamond's breakfast; and she told me, the old ladies were down in the eating-parlour, and that they wanted to speak to me. They had both been into the night-nursery the evening before, but it was after Miss Rosamond was asleep; so they had only looked at her—not asked me any questions.

"I shall catch it," thought I to myself, as I went along the north gallery. "And yet," I thought, taking courage, "it was in their charge I left her; and it's they that's to blame for letting her steal away unknown and unwatched." So I went in boldly, and told my story. I told it all to Miss Furnivall, shouting it close to her ear; but when I came to the mention of the other little girl out in the snow, coaxing and tempting her out, and wiling her up to the grand and beautiful lady by the Holly-tree, she threw her arms up—her old and withered arms—and cried aloud, "Oh! Heaven, forgive! Have mercy!"

Mrs. Stark took hold of her; roughly enough, I thought; but she was past Mrs. Stark's management, and spoke to me, in a kind of wild warning and authority.

"Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child." Then, Mrs. Stark hurried me out of the room; where, indeed, I was glad enough to go; but Miss Furnivall kept shrieking out, "Oh! have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago——"

I was very uneasy in my mind after that. I durst never leave Miss Rosamond, night or day, for fear lest she might slip off again, after some fancy or other; and all the more, because I thought I could make out that Miss Furnivall was crazy, from their odd ways about her; and I was afraid lest something of the same kind (which might be in the family, you know) hung over my darling. And the great frost never ceased all this time; and, whenever it was a more stormy night than usual, between the gusts, and through the wind, we heard the old lord playing on the great organ. But, old lord, or not, wherever Miss Rosamond went, there I followed; for my love for her, pretty helpless orphan, was stronger than my fear for the grand and terrible sound. Besides, it rested with me to keep her cheerful and merry, as becometh her age. So we played together, and wandered together, here and there, and everywhere; for I never dared

to lose sight of her again in that large and rambling house. And so it happened, that one afternoon, not long before Christmas day, we were playing together on the billiard-table in the great hall (not that we knew the right way of playing, but she liked to roll the smooth ivory balls with her pretty hands, and I liked to do whatever she did); and, by-and-bye, without our noticing it, it grew dusk indoors, though it was still light in the open air, and I was thinking of taking her back into the nursery, when, all of a sudden, she cried out:

"Look, Hester! look! there is 'my poor little girl out in the snow!'"

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond—dressed all unfit to be out-of-doors such a bitter night—crying, and beating against the window-panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble; and all the more, when I remembered me that, even in the stillness of that dead-cold weather, I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the Phantom Child had seemed to put forth all its force; and, although I had seen it wail and cry, no faintest touch of sound had fallen upon my ears. Whether I remembered all this at the very moment, I do not know; the great organ sound had so stunned me into terror; but this I know, I caught up Miss Rosamond before she got the hall-door opened, and clutched her, and carried her away, kicking and screaming, into the large bright kitchen, where Dorothy and Agnes were busy with their mince-pies.

"What is the matter with my sweet one?" cried Dorothy, as I bore in Miss Rosamond, who was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"She won't let me open the door for my little girl to come in; and she'll die if she is out on the Fells all night. Cruel, naughty Hester," she said, slapping me; but she might have struck harder, for I had seen a look of ghastly terror on Dorothy's face, which made my very blood run cold.

"Shut the back kitchen door fast, and bolt it well," said she to Agnes. She said no more; she gave me raisins and almonds to quiet Miss Rosamond; but she sobbed about the little girl in the snow, and would not touch any of the good things. I was thankful when she cried herself to sleep in bed. Then I stole down to the kitchen, and told Dorothy I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father's house in Appleshwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace. I said I had been frightened enough with the old lord's organ-playing; but now, that I had seen for myself this little moaning child, all decked

out as no child in the neighbourhood could be, beating and battering to get in, yet always without any sound or noise—with the dark wound on its right shoulder; and that Miss Rosamond had known it again for the phantom that had nearly lured her to her death (which Dorothy knew was true); I would stand it no longer.

I saw Dorothy change colour once or twice. When I had done, she told me she did not think I could take Miss Rosamond with me, for that she was my lord's ward, and I had no right over her; and she asked me, would I leave the child that I was so fond of, just for sounds and sights that could do me no harm; and that they had all had to get used to in their turns? I was all in a hot trembling passion; and I said it was very well for her to talk, that knew what these sights and noises betokened, and that had perhaps, had something to do with the Spectre-child while it was alive. And I taunted her so, that she told me all she knew at last; and then I wished I had never been told, for it only made me more afraid than ever.

She said she had heard the tale from old neighbours, that were alive when she was first married; when folks used to come to the hall sometimes, before it had got such a bad name on the country side: it might not be true, or it might, what she had been told.

The old lord was Miss Furnivall's father—Miss Grace, as Dorothy called her, for Miss Maude was the elder, and Miss Furnivall by rights. The old lord was eaten up with pride. Such a proud man was never seen or heard of; and his daughters were like him. No one was good enough to wed them, although they had choice enough; for they were the great beauties of their day, as I had seen by their portraits, where they hung in the state drawing-room. But, as the old saying is, "Pride will have a fall;" and these two haughty beauties fell in love with the same man, and he no better than a foreign musician, whom their father had down from London to play music with him at the Manor House. For, above all things, next to his pride, the old lord loved music. He could play on nearly every instrument that ever was heard of; and it was a strange thing it did not soften him; but he was a fierce dour old man, and had broken his poor wife's heart with his cruelty, they said. He was mad after music, and would pay any money for it. So he got this foreigner to come; who made such beautiful music, that they said the very birds on the trees stopped their singing to listen. And, by degrees, this foreign gentleman got such a hold over the old lord, that nothing would serve him but that he must come every year; and it was he that had the great organ brought from Holland and built up in the hall, where it stood now. He taught the old lord to play on it; but many and many a time, when Lord

Furnivall was thinking of nothing but his fine organ, and his finer music, the dark foreigner was walking abroad in the woods with one of the young ladies; now Miss Maude, and then Miss Grace.

Miss Maude won the day and carried off the prize, such as it was; and he and she were married, all unknown to any one; and before he made his next yearly visit, she had been confined of a little girl at a farm-house on the Moors, while her father and Miss Grace thought she was away at Doncaster Races. But though she was a wife and a mother, she was not a bit softened, but as haughty and as passionate as ever; and perhaps more so, for she was jealous of Miss Grace, to whom her foreign husband paid a deal of court—by way of blinding her—as he told his wife. But Miss Grace triumphed over Miss Maude, and Miss Maude grew fiercer and fiercer, both with her husband and with her sister; and the former—who could easily shake off what was disagreeable, and hide himself in foreign countries—went away a month before his usual time that summer, and half threatened that he would never come back again. Meanwhile, the little girl was left at the farm-house, and her mother used to have her horse saddled and gallop wildly over the hills to see her once every week, at the very least—for where she loved, she loved; and where she hated, she hated. And the old lord went on playing—playing on his organ; and the servants thought the sweet music he made had soothed down his awful temper, of which (Dorothy said) some terrible tales could be told. He grew infirm too, and had to walk with a crutch; and his son—that was the present Lord Furnivall's father—was with the army in America, and the other son at sea; so Miss Maude had it pretty much her own way, and she and Miss Grace grew colder and bitterer to each other every day; till at last they hardly ever spoke, except when the old lord was by. The foreign musician came again the next summer, but it was for the last time; for they led him such a life with their jealousy and their passions, that he grew weary, and went away, and never was heard of again. And Miss Maude, who had always meant to have her marriage acknowledged when her father should be dead, was left now a deserted wife—whom nobody knew to have been married—with a child that she dared not own, although she loved it to distraction; living with a father whom she feared, and a sister whom she hated. When the next summer passed over and the dark foreigner never came, both Miss Maude and Miss Grace grew gloomy, and sad; they had a haggard look about them, though they looked handsome as ever. But by and by Miss Maude brightened; for her father grew more and more infirm, and more than ever carried away by his music; and she and Miss Grace lived almost entirely apart, having separate rooms, the one on the west

side—Miss Maude on the east—those very rooms which were now shut up. So she thought she might have her little girl with her, and no one need ever know except those who dared not speak about it, and were bound to believe that it was, as she said, a cottager's child she had taken a fancy to. All this, Dorothy said, was pretty well known; but what came afterwards no one knew, except Miss Grace, and Mrs. Stark, who was even then her maid, and much more of a friend to her than ever her sister had been. But the servants supposed, from words that were dropped, that Miss Maude had triumphed over Miss Grace, and told her that all the time the dark foreigner had been mocking her with pretended love—he was her own husband; the colour left Miss Grace's cheek and lips that very day for ever, and she was heard to say many a time that sooner or later she would have her revenge; and Mrs. Stark was for ever spying about the east rooms.

One fearful night, just after the New Year had come in, when the snow was lying thick and deep, and the flakes were still falling—fast enough to blind any one who might be out and abroad—there was a great and violent noise heard, and the old lord's voice above all, cursing and swearing awfully,—and the cries of a little child,—and the proud defiance of a fierce woman,—and the sound of a blow,—and a dead stillness,—and moans and wailings dying away on the hill-side! Then the old lord summoned all his servants, and told them, with terrible oaths, and words more terrible, that his daughter had disgraced herself, and that he had turned her out of doors,—her, and her child,—and that if ever they gave her help,—or food,—or shelter,—he prayed that they might never enter Heaven. And, all the while, Miss Grace stood by him, white and still as any stone; and when he had ended she heaved a great sigh, as much as to say her work was done, and her end was accomplished. But the old lord never touched his organ again, and died, within the year; and no wonder! for, on the morrow of that wild and fearful night, the shepherds, coming down the Fell side, found Miss Maude sitting, all crazy and smiling, under the holly-trees, nursing a dead child,—with a terrible mark on its right shoulder. "But that was not what killed it," said Dorothy; "it was the frost and the cold,—every wild creature was in its hole, and every beast in its fold,—while the child and its mother were turned out to wander on the Fells! And now you know all! and I wonder if you are less frightened now?"

I was more frightened than ever; but I said I was not. I wished Miss Rosamond and myself well out of that dreadful house for ever; but I would not leave her, and I dared not take her away. But oh! how I watched her, and guarded her! We bolted the doors,

and shut the window-shutters fast, an hour or more before dark, rather than leave them open five minutes too late. But my little lady still heard the weird child crying and mourning; and not all we could do or say, could keep her from wanting to go to her, and let her in from the cruel wind and the snow. All this time, I kept away from Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, as much as ever I could; for I feared them—I knew no good could be about them, with their grey hard faces, and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone. But, even in my fear, I had a kind of pity—for Miss Furnivall, at least. Those gone down to the pit can hardly have a more hopeless look than that which was ever on her face. At last I even got so sorry for her—who never said a word but what was quite forced from her—that I prayed for her; and I taught Miss Rosamond to pray for one who had done a deadly sin; but often when she came to those words, she would listen, and start up from her knees, and say, "I hear my little girl pining and crying very sad—Oh! let her in, or she will die!"

One night—just after New Year's Day had come at last, and the long winter had taken a turn as I hoped—I heard the west drawing-room bell ring three times, which was the signal for me. I would not leave Miss Rosamond alone, for all she was asleep—for the old lord had been playing wilder than ever—and I feared lest my darling should waken to hear the spectre child; see her I knew she could not, I had fastened the windows too well for that. So, I took her out of her bed and wrapped her up in such outer clothes as were most handy, and carried her down to the drawing-room, where the old ladies sat at their tapestry work as usual. They looked up when I came in, and Mrs. Stark asked, quite astounded, "Why did I bring Miss Rosamond there, out of her warm bed?" I had begun to whisper, "Because I was afraid of her being tempted out while I was away, by the wild child in the snow," when she stopped me short (with a glance at Miss Furnivall) and said Miss Furnivall wanted me to undo some work she had done wrong, and which neither of them could see to unpick. So, I laid my pretty dear on the sofa, and sat down on a stool by them, and hardened my heart against them as I heard the wind rising and howling.

Miss Rosamond slept on sound, for all the wind blew so; and Miss Furnivall said never a word, nor looked round when the gusts shook the windows. All at once she started up to her full height, and put up one hand as if to bid us listen.

"I hear voices!" said she. "I hear terrible screams—I hear my father's voice!"

Just at that moment, my darling wakened with a sudden start: "My little girl is crying, oh, how she is crying!" and she tried to get up and go to her, but she got her

feet entangled in the blanket, and I caught her up; for my flesh had begun to creep at these noises, which they heard while we could catch no sound. In a minute or two the noises came, and gathered fast, and filled our ears; we, too, heard voices and screams, and no longer heard the winter's wind that raged abroad. Mrs. Stark looked at me, and I at her, but we dared not speak. Suddenly Miss Furnivall went towards the door, out into the ante-room, through the west lobby, and opened the door into the great hall. Mrs. Stark followed, and I durst not be left, though my heart almost stopped beating for fear. I wrapped my darling tight in my arms, and went out with them. In the hall the screams were louder than ever; they sounded to come from the east wing—nearer and nearer—close on the other side of the locked-up doors—close behind them. Then I noticed that the great bronze chandelier seemed all alight, though the hall was dim, and that a fire was blazing in the vast hearth-place, though it gave no heat; and I shuddered up with terror, and folded my darling closer to me. But as I did so, the east door shook, and she, suddenly struggling to get free from me, cried, "Hester! I must go! My little girl is there; I hear her; she is coming! Hester, I must go!"

I held her tight with all my strength; with a set will, I held her. If I had died, my hands would have grasped her still; I was so resolved in my mind. Miss Furnivall stood listening, and paid no regard to my darling, who had got down to the ground, and whom I, upon my knees now, was holding with both my arms clasped round her neck; she still striving and crying to get free.

All at once, the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress.

"Oh Hester! Hester!" cried Miss Rosamond. "It's the lady! the lady below the holly-trees; and my little girl is with her. Hester! Hester! let me go to her; they are drawing me to them. I feel them—I feel them. I must go!"

Again she was almost convulsed by her efforts to get away; but I held her tighter and tighter, till I feared I should do her a hurt; but rather than let her go towards those terrible phantoms. They passed along towards the great hall-door, where the winds howled and raved for their prey; but before they reached that, the lady turned; and I could see that she defied the old man with a fierce and proud defiance; but then she quailed—and then she threw up her arms wildly and piteously to save her child—her little child—from a blow from his uplifted crutch.

And Miss Rosamond was torn as by a power stronger than mine, and writhed in my arms; and sobbed (for by this time the poor darling was growing faint).

"They want me to go with them on to the fells—they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight." But when she saw the uplifted crutch she swooned away, and I thanked God for it. Just at this moment—when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child—Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, "Oh, father! father! spare the little innocent child!" But just then I saw—we all saw—another phantom shape itself, and grow clear out of the blue and misty light that filled the hall; we had not seen her till now, for it was another lady who stood by the old man, with a look of relentless hate and triumphant scorn. That figure was very beautiful to look upon, with a soft white hat drawn down over the proud brows, and a red and curling lip. It was dressed in an open robe of blue satin. I had seen that figure before. It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall's wild entreaty,—and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony and deadly serene. But at that moment, the dim lights, and the fire that gave no heat, went out of themselves, and Miss Furnivall lay at our feet stricken down by the palsy—death-stricken.

Yes! she was carried to her bed that night never to rise again. She lay with her face to the wall, muttering low but muttering away: "Alas! alas! what is done in youth can never be undone in age! What is done in youth can never be undone in age!"

THE HOST'S STORY.

ONCE on a time (as children's stories say), A merchant came from countries far away Back to his native land, bearing, conceal'd In a small casket, diamonds that would yield A sum sufficient to redeem a king Taken by force in perilous combating. • This merchant in his trade had now grown old; And all the chambers of his heart were cold, And the pale ashes of the fires of youth Lay on his soul, which knew not joy nor fath: But, at a bargain he was sharp and hard, For cent. per cent. alone he had regard. To swell his profits, or some mite to save, He would have seen his children in their grave, If children he had had; but, like a snake, • He seem'd all self-complete, and bloodless, and alone. The love of money burnt in him like thirst: His soul gaped for it, as, when earth is curs'd With drouth, it gapes for water; and when'er He saw a merchant with an equal share, He long'd to seize on all, by force or stealth, Adding still more to his preposterous wealth.

Behold him, now, upon the salt sea strand! Once more he treads upon his native land. • He knows the cliffs along the tawny beach; He knows, far off, the winding river-reach: He sees familiar sights—he hears familiar speech. He stops. Perhaps from off his arid brain The years have roll'd, and he is young again: Perhaps, with an ex-otion strange and new, The sense of home is on his heart like dew.— Alas! not so. His only present sense Is how to lodge to-night without expense.

He wander'd up into the little town; • And there by chance he heard of the renown Of a great merchant-prince, who lived hard by In royal pomp and liberality. With these words ear'd above the open door:— "Welcome to all men! Welcome, rich and poor!" Thither that miser gladly turn'd his face, And soon beheld, within a pleasant place Beset with leaves that talk'd across the breeze, White gleams of marble quivering through dark trees; And, going nearer, saw rich walls arise, With many windows, sparkling forth like eyes, And sculptured figures, gazing from a height, Like travelling angels pausing in their flight, And colonnades in far-withdrawing rows, And golden lamps in shadowy porticoes, And terrace-walks upon the level roof, Safe from intrusion, quiet, and aloof:— Such was the palace which this merchant found.

From out the gates there came a restless sound Of instruments of music; on light wings Seeming to poise, and murmur of far things In some divine and unknown tongue to all. The sordid merchant pass'd into the hall, And saw the master sitting at the board, And cried aloud: "Oh, fair and princely lord! Behold a ruin'd merchant at thy feet, Who of thy bounty craves a little meat, Lest Hunger fang him in the open ways. Unto thy grace and charity he prays, And bends him low."—The host rose up, and took The merchant by the hand, with genial look, And welcomed him with smiles and hearty speech. And, with his own hand, meat and drink did reach. And fed him nobly. But the miser's eye Regarded all things avariciously; And soon the splendours of that sun-bright house,— Prodigal wealth, and riches marvellous, The lucid gold, outshining everywhere, The jewels, making star-rays through the air,— Kindled a sudden hell-flame in his heart, Bating his breath, making his blood to start, And whisper'd in his brain a Devilish thing: Even this: "When all the house is slumbering, And eyes and ears, with fumes of feasting drenched, Are sealed in sleep and every sense is quenched, I will arise and seize on what I may, And place it safely in the court till day; And, that I may escape with all entire, This princely house will I consume with fire, And burn the phoenix in his spicy nest."

The feast being done, all rose to seek their rest: And that old traitor, with his lips of fraud, Said to the host: "Sweet sir! a spirit flawed Has, by the oil and honey of your love, Been rendered whole; and He who reigos above Will, I doubt not, increase your righteous store— Perhaps this very night will crowd still more

Into your chests. Look not incredulously :
Heaven works in darkness and in sleep ; and I
Feel that my tongue has spoken prophecy."

The host made answer in a courteous tone ;
And now the guests into their rooms are shown,
And mirth and light have vanished from the hall,
And sleep lies heavy on the souls of all—
All but that murderous thief, who sits and stares
Into the lamp's broad flame, that idly flares,
Shaking the shadows like a ghostly hand.
He thinks upon the scheme which he has plann'd :
He listens to the stillness round about :
He hears the stirring of the wind without,
The chirping of the crickets far beneath,
The sighing sedge upon the neighbouring heath.
He takes his lamp, and stealthily he goes ;
The silent house seems conscious in repose :
Along the stairs the shadows shift and glide ;
They cling like shrouded devils at his side :
The marble columns, in their spectral white,
Come heavily through the glooms to meet the light :
A dreary quiet lies upon the place.
That living Avarice, with his crafty face,
Enters the hall, deserted now and cold,
And fills a bag with jewels and with gold,
And takes whatever pleases him the best ;
Then places his own diamonds with the rest,
And in the court-yard stows all privily.

Now, wake, ye sleepers ; for there's Murder nigh !
A devil is in the house who, while you sleep,
About the basement noiselessly doth creep,
And makes a fire with faggots and with straw ;
And soon the flames will gather strength, and flaw
Those solid stones, and wrap them like a cloak.
And glare and lighten through their night of smoke !
Even now the terror hath advanced its head :
The infant mischief carefully is fed :
A scorching tongue hath fastened on the walls—
Farewell the joy ! Farewell the festal !
Up, through the beams, the sharp flames gnaw and
break,

Out at the window peering like a snake ;
The massive pillars fiercely are embraced,
The leaden conduits slowly melt and waste ;
Forth leaps the nimble fire, and hastily
Its bloody writing scores upon the sky !
Forth leap the flames ; forth rush the sparks o'erhead ;
Forth rolls the smoke, and burns to heavy red ;
Forth bursts the steady glare,—and all the night
has fled !

A sense of fire has gone throughout the house.
The host, the guests, and all the servants, rouse ;
And from their rooms tumultuously they pour,
A wild and stumbling crowd, and through the door
Pass into the court-yard. They look around,
And see their dwelling as with serpents wound,
And weep, and wring their hands, and cry " Alas ! "

Meanwhile, the spoiler, seeking to amass
More treasure still, goes groping here and there
In empty chambers, and all places where
The fire has not yet reached ; until at last
He hears the house awake, and knows his chance is
past.

He cries aloud, " I am undone—undone ! "
And towards the threshold he attempts to run,
And meets the vengeful fire upon the way,
And glares against its glare, and stands at bay.
It is the master now, and he the slave !
He flies before it ; his lips moan and rave ;

He runs about ; he traces to and fro ;
He calls for help ; he knows not where to go ;
He gnashes like a wild beast in a cage.
The cruel flames come roaring in their rage,
And scorch his robe. He howls, " I cannot flee !
The fire which I have kindled, eateth me ! "
The pavements glow ; the hot air sings and flares ;
For very life he dashes up the stairs,
And runs toward a window at the back,
And far away beholds the cloudy rack
Weltering like blood. One chance alone he sees—
He leaps straight out and falls between the trees.
Half-stunn'd, and bruise'd, he rises yet again,
Making strange sounds, and cursing in his pain.
He reels and stumbles, yet still holds his flight,
And fades away into the distant night.

The noise and clamour have at length awoken
The neighbours round, who see the glare and smoke,
And rise, and cast up water on the flames ;
And soon the fierce destruction shrieks and tames.
Back goes the scarlet light from far and nigh ;
Back comes the natural darkness to the sky.
The empty windows, with their inward red,
Glow like strange eyes within a dusky head,
And gleam, and glance, and lingeringly die out.
Then, with a joyful cry, the hasty rout
Enter the house, and find the larger part
Whole, and unhurt ; and each man in his heart
Rejoices, and makes merry at the sight.
And now the master of that palace bright
Looks round, and finds his household all are there,
Safe from the fire, uninjured in a hair,
Except that aged merchant : only he
Is absent ; and no traces can they see,
Although they search the empty rooms and all
The smoking ruins huddled 'gainst the wall.
They think—" He did not wake in time to fly ; "
Till in a heap of char'd wood they descry
His lamp, and see that there the fire began,
And say among themselves—" This was the man
Who lit the flames that might have been our death
And at that instant, in the self-same breath,
Some others in the open court-yard find
The plunder which the wretch had left behind ;
And lo ! the store is wondrously increased
By a small box of diamonds of the East,
In value greater than a prince's crown.

A proclamation was sent up and down
The neighbouring land, to see if any claim
Were made upon these gems ; but no one came.
The true possessor durst not reappear,
To make his title to the jewels clear.
And so, in time, they rightfully belong'd
To him who had so grievously been wrong'd
By the first owner : and their worth was higher,
A thousand fold, than what was burnt by fire.

Thus joy was born out of calamity ;
And that old merchant, when he meant to lie,
In very truth had spoken prophecy.

THE GRANDFATHER'S STORY.

WHEN I first took my seat as a clerk in our
Bank, the state of the country was far less
safe than it is now. The roads were not only
unconscious of Macadam, and fatal in many
places to wheels and springs, but dangerous
to a still more alarming degree from the out-
rages and robberies to which travellers were

exposed. Men's minds were unsettled by the incidents of the war on which we had just entered; commerce was interrupted, credit was at an end, and distress began to be discovered among whole classes of the population who had hitherto lived in comfort. However harshly the law was administered, it seemed to have no terrors for the evil-doer, and, indeed, the undiscerning cruelty of the Statute book defeated its own object by punishing all crimes alike. But, a time of pecuniary pressure is not a bad season for a bank. The house flourished, though the country was in great straits; and the enormous profits at that time realised by bankers—which enabled them to purchase large estates and outshine the old territorial aristocracy—made the profession as unpopular among the higher classes as it had already become among the unreasoning masses. By then, a banker was looked upon as a sort of licensed forger, who created enormous sums of money by merely signing square pieces of flimsy paper; and I am persuaded the robbery of a bank would have been considered by many people quite as meritorious an action as the dispersal of a band of coiners. These, however, were not the sentiments of us bankers' clerks. We felt that we belonged to a mighty corporation, on whose good will depended the prosperity of half the farms in the county. We considered ourselves the executive government, and carried on the business of the office with a pride and dignity that would have fitted us for Secretaries of State. We used even to walk the streets with a braggadocio air, as if our pockets were loaded with gold; and if two of us hired a gig for a country excursion, we pretended to look under the driving-seat as if to see to the safety of inconceivable amounts of money: ostentatiously examining our pistols, to show that we were determined to defend our treasure or die. Not seldom these precautions were required in reality; for, when a pressure for gold occurred among our customers, two of the most courageous of the clerks were despatched with the required amount, in strong leathern bags deposited under the seat of the gig, which bags they were to guard at the risk of their lives. Whether from the bodily strength I was gifted with, or from some idea that as I was not given to boasting, I might really possess the necessary amount of boldness, I do not know, but I was often selected as one of the guards to a valuable cargo of this description; and as if to show an impartiality between the most silent and the most talkative of their servants, the partners united with me in this service the most blustering, boastful, good-hearted and loud-voiced young gentleman I have ever known. You have most of you heard of the famous electioneering orator Tom Ruddle—who stood at every vacancy for county and borough, and passed his whole life between the elections, in canvassing for himself or friends. Tom Ruddle was my

fellow clerk at the time I speak of, and generally the companion of my drives in charge of treasure.

"What would you do," I said to Tom, "in case we are attacked?"

"Tell ye what!" said Tom, with whom that was a favourite way of beginning almost every sentence, "Tell ye what! I'll shoot 'em through the head."

"Then you expect there will be more than one?"

"I should think so," said Tom, "if there was only one, I'd jump out of the gig and give him a precious licking. Tell ye what! 'T would be a proper punishment for his impertinence."

"And if half a dozen should try it?"

"Shoot 'em all!"

Never was there such a determined custodian as the gallant Tom Ruddle.

One cold December evening we were suddenly sent off, in charge of three bags of coin, to be delivered into customers' hands within ten or twelve miles of the town. The clear frosty sky was exhilarating, our courage was excited by the speed of the motion, the dignity of our responsible office, and a pair of horse-pistols which lay across the apron.

"Tell ye what!" said Tom, taking up one of the pistols and (as I afterwards found) full-cocking it, "I should rather like to meet a few robbers. I would serve them as I did those three disbanded soldiers."

"How was that?"

"Oh! it's as well," said Tom, pretending to grow very serious, "to say nothing about these unfortunate accidents. Blood is a frightful thing on the conscience, and a bullet through a fellow's head is a disagreeable sight; but—tell ye what!—I'd do it again. Fellows who risk their lives must take their chance, my boy."

And here Tom put the other pistol on full cock, and looked audaciously on both sides of the road, as if daring the lurking murderers to come forth and receive the reward of their crimes. As to the story of the soldiers, and the fearful insinuations of a bloody deed executed on one or all, it was a prodigious rhodomontade—for Tom was such a tender-hearted individual, that if he had shot a kitten it would have made him unhappy for a week. But, to hear him talk, you would have taken him for a civic Richard the Third, one who had "neither pity, love, nor fear." His whiskers also were very ferocious, and suggestive of battle, murder, and ruin. So, he went on playing with his pistol, and gying himself out for an un pitying executioner of vengeance on the guilty, until we reached the small town where one of our customers resided, and it was necessary for one of us to carry one of the bags to its destination. Tom undertook this task. As the village at which the remaining parcels were to be delivered was only a mile further on, he determined to walk across the fields,

and join me after he had executed his commission. He looked carefully at the priming of his pistol, stuck it ostentatiously in the outside breast-pocket of his great-coat; and, with stately steps, marched off with the heavy money-bag in his hand. I put the whip to the horse, and trotted merrily forward, thinking nothing whatever of robbery or danger, in spite of the monitory conversation of Tom Ruddle.

Our first customer resided at the outskirts of the village—a farmer who required a considerable amount in gold. I pulled up at the narrow dark entrance of the lane that led up to his house; and, as my absence couldn't be for more than a few minutes, I left the gig, and proceeded up the lane with my golden treasure. I delivered it into the hands of its owner; and, manfully resisting all his hospitable invitations, I took my leave, and walked rapidly towards the gig. As I drew near, I perceived in the clear startlight a man mounted on the step, and groping under the seat. I ran forward, and the man, alarmed by my approach, rapidly raised himself from his stooping position, and, presenting a pistol, fired it so close to my eyes that the flash blinded me for a moment; the action was so sudden and my surprise so great, that for a short-time too I was bewildered, and scarcely knew whether I was alive or dead.

The old horse never started at the report, and I rested my hand on the rim of the wheel, while I endeavoured to recover my scattered thoughts. The first thing I ascertained was that the man had disappeared. I then hurriedly examined under the seat; and, to my intense relief, perceived the remaining money-bag still in its place. There was a slit in it, however, near the top, as if made by a knife—the robber probably resolving merely to possess himself of the coin, without the dangerous accompaniment of the leathern sack, by which he might have been traced.

"Tell ye what!" said a voice close beside me, as I concluded my scrutiny; "I don't like practical jokes like that—firing off pistols to frighten folks. You'll alarm the whole village."

"Tom," I said, "now's the time to show your courage. A man has robbed the gig—or tried to do it—and has fired at me within a yard of my face."

Tom grew perceptibly pale at this information. "Was there only one?"

"Only one."

"Then the accomplices are near. What's to be done? Shall we rouse farmer Malins and get his men to help?"

"Not for the world," I said, "I would rather face a dozen shots than have my carelessness known at the Bank. It would ruin me for life. Let us count the money in this bag, quietly deliver it if it be correct, and then follow the robber's course."

It was only a hundred guinea bag, that one, but the counting was nervous work.

We found three guineas wanting. We were luckily able to supply them from our own pockets (having just received our quarter's salaries), and I left Tom there, delivered the bag at its destination very near at hand, without a word of the robbery, and went back to him.

"Now! Which way did he go?" said Tom, resuming a little of his former air, and clutching his pistol like the chief of a chorus of banditti in a melodrama.

I told him I had been so confused that I had not observed which way he had retreated. Tom was an old hand at poaching—though he was a clergyman's son, and ought to have set a better example.

"I have heard a hare stir at a hundred yards," he said, and laid his ear close to the frosty ground. "If he's within a quarter of a mile, I shall hear him move." I lay also down on the ground. There was silence for a long time. We heard nothing but our breathing and the breathing of the horse.

"Hush!" said Tom at last. "He has come out of hiding. I hear a man's step far away to the left; bring your pistol, and let us follow." I took the pistol and found the flint down on the pan. The man had fired at me with my own weapon, and no wonder he had fired so suddenly; for Tom now acknowledged to his belief that he had forgotten to uncock it.

"Never mind," said Tom, "I'll blow his brains out with mine, and you can split his skull with the butt end of yours. Tell ye what! It's of no use to spare those malefactors. I'll fire, the moment I see him."

"Not till I tell you whether it is the robber or not."

"Should you know him, do you think?"

"In the flash of the powder I saw a pair of haggard and amazed eyes which I shall never forget."

"On, then!" said Tom; "we'll have a three hundred pound reward, and see the rascal hanged beside!"

We set off, slowly and noiselessly, in the direction Tom had pointed out. Occasionally he applied his ear to the ground, and always muttering "We have him! we have him!" proceeded in the same careful manner as before. Suddenly Tom said, "He's doubling. He has been leading us on the wrong scent all this time; he has turned towards the village."

"Then our plan," I said, "should be to get there before him. If we intercept him in that way, he can't escape; and I feel sure I could identify him if I saw him by candle-light."

"Tell ye what!—that's the plan," replied my companion. "We'll watch at the entrance of the village, and arrest him the moment he comes in."

We crept through an opening of the hedge, and got once more in the straight lane that

led to the village. It was now very late, and the cold was so intense that it kept every person within-doors; for, we heard no sound in the whole hamlet, except, high up in the clear air, the ticking of the church clock, and the loud jangle of the quarters that seemed like peals of artillery in the excited state of our minds and senses. Close to the church—which appeared to guard the entrance of the village, with its low buttressed walls, and its watch-tower of a steeple—there was a wretched ruined-looking cottage, which projected so far into the lane that the space between it and the church was not more than eight or nine feet. It struck us both at the same moment that if we could effect a lodgment here, it was impossible for the man to slip into the village without our observation.

After listening for a while at the windows and doors of the building, we concluded it was uninhabited; gently pushing open the door, we climbed a narrow stone stair-case, and were making for a gable end window which we had observed from the road, and which commanded the whole approach to the village, when we heard a voice say in a whisper, as we attained the garret we were in search of, "Is that you, William?"

We stopped for a minute or two and the speaker's expectation was disappointed. We now placed ourselves at the window, and listened for the slightest sound. We remained there, listening, for a long time. Several quarters had died off into "the eternal melodies," far up in the church tower, and we were just beginning to despair of seeing the object of our search, when Tom nudged me noiselessly with his elbow.

"Tell ye what!" he whispered very softly, "there's a footstep round the corner. See! There's a man under the hedge looking up at the next window. There—he moves! We must be after him. Hallo! Stop—he crosses the lane. He's coming into this very house!"

I certainly did see a figure silently steal across the road and disappear under the doorway of the building we were in. But, we had no light; and we knew nothing of the arrangement of the rooms. Another quarter thrown off from the old church clock, warned us that the night was rapidly passing away. We had almost resolved to retrace our steps if possible, and get back to where we had left our unfortunate horse, when I was again nudged by my friend's elbow.

"Tell ye what!" he whispered. "Something's going on;" and he pointed to a feeble glimmer on the rafters of the roof above us.

The light proceeded from the next room, which had not been built up above the height of the ceiling joists, so that the roof was common to both chambers—the adjoining one, and that in which we were—the partition-wall being only seven or eight feet high. We could have heard anything that was said, but we listened in vain for the slightest

sound. The light, however, continued to burn; we saw it flickering across the top of the habitation, and dimly playing far up among the dark thatch of the roof.

"Tell ye what!" said Tom. "If we could get up, on these old joists, we could see into the next room. Hold my pistol till I get up and—tell ye what!—then I can shoot 'em easy."

"For Heaven's sake, Tom!" I said, "be careful. Let me see whether it is the man."

"Come up, then," said Tom, who now bestrode one of the main beams and gave me a hand to aid my ascent. We were both on the level of the dividing wall, and, by placing our heads a little forward, could see every portion of the neighbouring room. A miserable room it was. There was a small round table, there were a couple of old chairs; but utter wretchedness was the characteristic of the cheerless and fireless apartment.

There was a person, apparently regardless of the cold, seated at the table and reading a book. The little taper which had been lighted without any noise, was only sufficient to throw its illumination on the features and figure of the reader, and on the table at which she sat. They were wasted and pallid features—but she was young, and very pretty; or the mystery and strangeness of the incident threw such an interest around her, that I thought so. Her dress was very scanty, and a shawl, wrapped closely round her shoulders, perhaps displayed, rather than concealed the deficiency of her clothing in other respects. Suddenly we saw at the farther end of the room a figure emerge from the darkness; Tom grasped his pistol more firmly, and put the cock back, preventing it from making any noise with his thumb. The man stood in the doorway, as if uncertain whether to enter or not. He looked for a long time at the woman, who still continued her reading; and then silently advanced. She heard his step, and lifted up her head, and looked in his face without saying a word. Such a face, so pale, so agitated, I never in my life saw.

"We shall go to-morrow," he said; "I have got some money as I expected." And with these words he laid three golden guineas on the table before her. Still, she said nothing—but watched his countenance with her lips apart.

"Tell ye what!" said Tom; "That's the money. Is that the man?"

"I don't know yet, till I see his eyes." In the meantime, the conversation went on below.

"I borrowed these pieces from a friend," continued the man, as if in answer to the look she bent on him; "a friend, I tell you. I might have had more, but I would take only three. They are enough, to carry us to Liverpool, and, once there, we are sure of a passage to the West. Once in the West the world is before us. I can work

Mary. We are young—a poor man has no chance here, but we can go to America with fresh hopes—”

“And a good conscience?” said the woman, in a whisper like Lady Macbeth’s.

The man was silent. At last he seemed to grow angry at the steadiness of her gaze. “Why do you look at me in that manner? I tell you we shall start to-morrow.”

“And the money?” said the woman.

“I will send it back to my friend from whom I borrowed it, out of my first earnings. I took only three, in case it should incommode him to lend me more.”

“I must see that friend myself,” said Mary, “before I touch the money.”

“Tell ye what! Is it the man?” again asked Tom.

“Hush!” I said; “let us listen.”

“I recognised a friend of mine in one of the clerks in the Melfield Bank. I give you my word I got the coins from him.”

“Tell ye what! He confesses,” said Tom; “let us spring on him by surprise—an ugly ruffian as ever I saw!”

“And with that sum,” he continued, “see what we can do. It will relieve us from our distress, which has come upon us—Mary, you know I speak the truth in this—from no other fault of mine than too much confidence in a treacherous friend. I can’t see you starve. I can’t see the baby reduced from our comfortable keeping to lie on straw at the end of a barn like this. I can’t do it—I won’t!” he went on, getting more impassioned in his words. “At whatever cost, I will give you a chance of comfort and independence.”

“And peace of mind?” replied Mary. “Oh, William, I must tell you what terrible fears have been in my heart, all this dreary night, during your absence; I have read, and prayed, and turned for comfort to Heaven. Oh, William, give the money back to your friend—I say nothing about the loan—take it back; I can’t look at it! Let us starve—let us die, if it must be so—but take that money away.”

Tom Ruddle gently put down the cock of his pistol, and ran the sleeve of his coat across his eyes.

“Let us trust, William,” the woman went on, “and deliverance will be found. The weather is very cold,” she added. “There seems no visible hope; but I cannot altogether despair at this time of the year. This barn is not more humble than the manger at Bethlehem, which I have been reading about all night.”

At this moment, a great clang of bells pealed from the old church tower; it was so near that it shook the rafters on which we sat, and filled all the room with the sharp ringing sound. “Hark!” cried the man, startled, “What’s that?”—“It is Christmas morning,” said the woman. “Ah, William, William, what a different spirit we should welcome it with; in what a different spirit

we have welcomed it, many and many a happy time!”

He listened for a moment or two to the bells. Then he sank on his knees, and put his head on her lap; and there was perfect silence except the Christmas music. “Tell ye what!” said Tom. “I remember we always sang a hymn at this hour, in my father’s house. Let us be off—I wouldn’t disturb these people for a thousand guineas.”

Some little noise was made by our preparations to descend. The man looked up, while the woman still continued absorbed in prayer. My head was just on the level of the wall. Our eyes met. They were the same that had flashed so wildly when the pistol was fired from the gig. We continued our descent. The man rose quietly from his knees, and put his finger to his lip. When we got down stairs he was waiting for us at the door. “Not before *her*,” he said. “I would spare her the sight, if I could. I am guilty of the robbery, but I wouldn’t have harmed you, sir. The pistol went off, the moment I put my hand upon it. For God’s sake tell her of it gently, when you have taken me away!”

“Tell ye what!” said Tom Ruddle—whose belligerent feelings had entirely disappeared—“the pistol was my mistake, and it’s all a mistake together. Come to my friend and me, at the Bank, the day after to-morrow and—tell ye what!—the sharp wind brings water to my eyes—we’ll manage to lend you some more.”

So, the bells still rang clear in the midnight air; and our drive home through the frosty lanes was the pleasantest drive we ever had in our lives.

THE CHARWOMAN’S STORY.

A person is flustered by being had up into the dining-room for to drink merry Christmas and them (though wishing, I am sure, to every party present as many as would be agreeable to their own selves), and it ain’t easy rightly to remember at a moment’s notice what a person *did* see in the ghostly way. Indeed I never seen nothing myself, it being Thomas which did so—and he heard it. Hows’ever, the account of it having been seemingly carried to the young ladies by Nurse, and they wishing to know it all correct, it were as I will now mention.

I was cook to Alderman Playford when he died so suddenly; and very handsome mourning we servants had, though I’m only a hard-working charwoman now.

The Alderman kept up two establishments; his town-house at Dewcester, for the sake of the business, and his country-house at Brownham, five or six miles off. I was at Brownham, and I liked that the best because the young ladies liked it best; they were real ladies, they were. We had everything comfortable there; I may say grand gardens,

there was, and fish-ponds, a brewery, and a dairy, besides stables and that. Latterly too, the Alderman spent most of his time there. Thomas, the coachman, used to drive him backwards and forwards when he had to go to Dewcester; where he sometimes slept, if there was anything particular going on in the Aldermen's Room, or if there was a Ward Election coming on; for the Alderman, you know, was a great electioneer. But Thomas always came home to us: when the Alderman slept at Dewcester, he returned to Brownham for the sake of protection to us females, and to attend to the things.

Now the Alderman had had a paralytic stroke some years before; and, ever since then, though he got quite over it, he had a very curious step, and one of his shoes made a queer creaking noise, not like any other noise as ever I heard. As he used to be coming down the front gravel walk, or going from one part of the house to another—it was a large, old-fashioned, red brick house, it was—his shoe went “Creak! creak!” so that you could tell exactly where he was without seeing him. He didn't walk heavy, and he didn't walk quick; and, long before he came in sight, you knew he was a coming by the noise of his creaking shoe, though you couldn't hardly hear the sound of his footsteps. I've heard many and many a creaking shoe, but I never hear one creak like that.

Thomas and me was very good friends. I thought he'd meant more by it than he did, though I don't believe, even now, that 'twas all cupboard love, though certainly some of it was. Who can tell what might have happened, if he hadn't married the Widow Rogers, that everybody said was left so well, when she wasn't? Poor Thomas! The day after his wedding was a sad day for him; he having gone and done it, past looking back. But we was always good friends at Brownham, as fellow-servants ought to be. I was mistress in the kitchen; and he didn't fare the worse for that.

One evening he'd come back from driving the Alderman to Dewcester, and he was to go and fetch him in the afternoon next day. The night was wet and muggy, with a gusty wind. As we sat in the kitchen, we could hear the rain beat against the outside shutters, and the water pour from the spouts on the roof. The wind puffed and blew, like a man in a passion, as if it were whirling round and round the house, to try and find a place to get in at. Thomas had taken off his wet leggings and things, and put on his in-door ones, and we all sat chatting round the kitchen fire a little later than usual. We heard the young ladies go up stairs to bed, and then the other maids went up to bed too, leaving Thomas and me a little while to ourselves.

So we went on talking and talking about the family, and about the neighbours, and I thought, that, perhaps, Thomas would say,

something about his feelings; but he was just as usual. When the kitchen clock pointed to a quarter to twelve, I took up my candle, and says, “Good night, Thomas, I'm going to bed.”—“Good night, cook,” says he; “I'll clear away the ladies' supper-things out of the dining-room, and then I'll go to bed, too, for I'm tired,” says he.

I hadn't been up-stairs more than a quarter of an hour, and hadn't finished undressing, before I heard some one tapping at my door. “Who's that?” says I, in a fright.—“That's me, cook,” says Thomas, “I want to speak to you.”—I couldn't think what he wanted to say; he'd had plenty of time to say anything particular, but I little thought he'd seen the Widow Rogers that very afternoon. So I dressed myself, and came out into the passage, and there stood Thomas looking more serious than I'd ever seen him at church. “Come down stairs, cook,” says he, “I've something to tell you;” so solemn-like that I couldn't think what could be the matter.

We went into the kitchen. I made up the fire a little, and sat down by it. Thomas took a seat on the other side. He behaved just as if he'd been at a funeral. “Cook,” says he, “I'm sure you'll hear of something soon.”—“Lor, Thomas,” says I, “what should I hear of?”—“Why,” says he, “you'll find the Alderman is dead.”—“Dead!” says I, “that's very shocking!”

“It isn't half so shocking as what I have just heard. Cook,” says he, in a hollow tone of voice, “Cook, I have just heard the Alderman's ghost; and I'm sure we shall never see him any more alive! When I went to clear away the ladies' supper-things in the dining-room, I found a glass full of punch standing in the middle of the tray. You know that's the way they often do, when I come home wet after driving the Alderman”—(for they were *real* ladies: it would have been too familiar-like to say, Thomas, here's a glass of punch for you)—“and I was just going to drink it off to the Alderman's health, when I heard the hall-door open, and creak! creak! creak! came the sound of his footsteps across the hall. I did not at the moment think it strange he should come back to Brownham so late, and so I sets down the punch, and takes up a candle, and runs out of the room, to show him a light. I could see nothing at all; but master's footsteps passed me, and went creak! creak! creak! up the stairs. I followed them to the first landing-place, but still I could see no Alderman, nor nothing. I cries out ‘Good God, sir, where are you? Don't do this!’ I stopped and listened; not a sound but the creak! creak! creak! The footsteps went up to his room-door; I heard the door open and shut, and then I heard nothing more. But, cook, the doors are all barred and locked for the night, and how could the Alderman get into the house? As sure as you're alive, I've heard his ghost!”

I thought so too, at the time, and now I know it. We sat up all night to be ready for the news when it came from Dewcester. Early next morning a messenger arrived. Thomas let him in; and "before" he told us what had brought him to Brownham, Thomas said to him, "Alderman Playford is dead." The messenger was astonished, as well he might be, and said "Lor, how could you know that?"—"He died last night," said Thomas, "as the clock was striking twelve, and I heard his footstep cross the hall, and go up the staircase. The Alderman's step is like nobody else's, and I knew by that he must be dead."

And wishing we may all live happy ever afterwards!

THE DEAF PLAYMATE'S STORY.

I DON'T know how you have all managed, or what you have been telling. I have been thinking all this time, what I could tell that was interesting; and I don't know anything very particular that has happened to me, except all about Charley Felkin, and why he has asked me to go and stay there. I will tell you that story, if you like.

You know Charley is a year younger than I am, and I had been at Dr. Owen's a year when he came. He was to be in my room; and he did not know anything about school; and he was younger, and uncomfortable at first; and altogether, he fell to my share; and so we saw a great deal of each other. He soon cheered up, and could stand his ground; and we were great friends. He soon got to like play, and left off moping; and we used to talk a great deal in wet weather, and out on long walks. Our best talks, though, were after we were gone to bed. I was not deaf then; and we used to have such talks about home, and ghosts, and all sorts of things; and nobody ever overheard us that we know of, but once; and then we got nothing worse than a tremendous rap at the door, and the Doctor bidding us go to sleep directly.

Well; we went on, just so, for a good while, till I began to have the ear-ache. At first, Charley was very kind to me. I remember his asking me, once, to lean my head on his shoulder, and his keeping my head warm till the pain got better; and he sat quite still the whole time. But perhaps he got tired; or—I don't know—perhaps I grew cross. I used to try not; but sometimes the pain was so bad, and lasted so long, that I used to wish I was dead; and I dare say I might be cross enough then, or dismal, which boys like worse. Charley used to seem not to believe there was anything the matter with me. I used to climb up the apple-tree, and get on the wall, and pretend to be asleep, to get out of their way; and then the boys used to come running that way, and say, "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall," and one day when

I heard Charley say it, I said "Oh, Charley! and he said, "Well, why do you go dumping there?" and he pretended that I made a great fuss about nothing. I know he did not really think so, but wanted to get rid of it all. I know it, because he was so kind always, and so merry when I got well again; and went to play with the rest. And then, I was pleased, and thought I must have been cross, to have thought the things I had; and so we never explained. If we had, it might have saved a great deal that happened afterwards. I am sure I wish we had.

When Charley came, he was a good deal behind me—being a year younger, and never having been to school. I used to think I could keep a-head of all but three boys in my class; and I used to try, hard, to keep a-head of them. But, after a time, I began to go down. I used to learn my lessons as hard as ever; still, somehow the boys were quicker in answering, and half-a-dozen of them used to get my place, before I knew what it was all about. Dr. Owen saw me, one day, near the bottom of the class; and he said he never saw me there before; and the usher said I was stupid; and the Doctor said, then I must be idle. And the boys said so too, and gave me nicknames about it; I ever thought so myself, too, and I was very miserable. Charley got into our class before I got out of it; and indeed I never did get out of it. I believe his father and mother used to hold me up to him—for he might easily speak well of me while he was fond of me. At least, he seemed bent upon getting above me in class. I did try hard against that; and he saw it, and tried his utmost. I could not like him much then. I dare say I was very ill-tempered, and that put him out. After I had tried till I was sick, to learn my lesson perfect, and then to answer questions, Charley would get the better of me: and then he would triumph over me. I did not like to fight him, because he could not have stood up against me: and besides, it was all true—he did beat me at lessons. So we used to go to bed without speaking. We had quite left off telling stories at night, some time before. One morning, Charley said, when we got up, that I was the most sulky fellow he ever saw. I had been afraid, lately, that I was growing rather sulky, but I did not know of any particular reason that he had for saying so just then (though he had a reason, as I found out afterwards). So, I told him what I thought—that he had grown very unkind, and that I would not bear with it if he did not behave as he used to do. He said that whenever he tried to do so, I sulked. I did not know, then, what reason he had to say that, nor what this was all about. The thing was, he had felt uncomfortable, the night before, about something in his behaviour to me, and he had whispered to me, to ask me to forgive him. It was quite dark, and I never heard him: he asked me to turn and

speaking to him; but I never stirred, of course; and no wonder he supposed I was sulking. But all this is very disagreeable; and so I will go on to other things.

Mrs. Owen was in the orchard one day, and she chanced to look over the hedge, and she saw me lying on my face on the ground. I used often to be so then, for I was stupid at play, where there was any calling out, and the boys used to make game of me. Mrs. Owen told the Doctor, and the Doctor said there must be something wrong, and he should be better satisfied if Mr. Pratt, the surgeon, saw me. Mr. Pratt found out that I was deaf, though he could not tell what was the matter with my ears. He would have put on blisters, and I don't know what else; but the Doctor said it was so near the holidays, I had better wait till I got home. There was an end to taking places, however. The Doctor told them all, that it was clear now why I had seemed to go back so much; and that he reproached himself, and wondered at everybody—that the reason had not been found out before. The top of the class was nearest to the usher, or the Doctor, when he heard us; and I was to stand there always, and not take places with the rest. After that, I heard the usher very well, and got on again. And after that, the boys, and particularly Charley, were kinder again; and if I had been good-tempered, I dare say all would have gone right. But, somehow, everything seemed to go wrong and be uncomfortable, wherever I might be, and I was always longing to be somewhere else. I was longing now for the holidays. I dare say every boy was longing for the holidays; but I was particularly, because everything at home was so bright, and distinct, and cheerful, compared with school, that half-year. Everybody seemed to have got to speak thick and low; most of the birds seemed to have gone away; and this made me long more to see my turtle-doves, which Peggy had promised to take care of for me. Even the church-bell seemed as if it was muffled; and when the organ played, there were great gaps in the music, which was so spoiled that I used to think I had rather there had been no music at all. But all this is disagreeable too; so I will go on about Charley.

His father and mother asked me to go home with him, to stay for a week; and father said I might; so I went—and I never was so uncomfortable in my life. I did not hear what they said to each other, unless I was quite in the middle of them, and I knew I looked stupid when they were all laughing, and I did not know what it was about. I was sure that Charley's sisters were quizzing me,—Kate particularly. I felt always as if everybody was looking at me; and I know they talked about me sometimes. I know it because I heard something that Mrs. Felkin said one day, when there was a noise in the street, and she spoke loud without knowing

it. I heard her say, "He never told us the poor child was deaf." I don't know why, but I could not bear this. And, after that, some of them were always telling me things in a loud voice, so that everybody turned and looked at me; and then I made a mistake sometimes about what they told me; and one mistake was so ridiculous that I saw Kate turn her back to laugh, and she laughed for ever so long after. Altogether, I could not bear it, and so I ran away. It was all very silly of me, and I know I was very ill-tempered, and I know how Mr. and Mrs. Felkin must have found themselves mistaken about me, as a friend for Charley; but I did not see any use in staying longer, just to be pitied and laughed at, without doing any good to anybody; so I ran away at the end of three days. I did so long to come home; for I never had any doubt that everything would be comfortable at home. I knew where the coach passed,—a mile and a half from Mr. Felkin's,—very early in the morning, and I got out of the study window and ran. Nobody was up, though, and I need not have been afraid. I had to ask the gardener for the key of the back gate, and he threw it to me from his window. When I was outside, I called to him to bid him ask Charley to send my things after me to my father's house. By the road-side, there was a pond, under a high hedge, and with some dark trees bending over it. It just came into my head to drown myself there, and I should be out of every body's way, and all this trouble would be at an end. But ah! when I saw our church-steeple, I was happy! When I saw our own gate, I thought I should go on to be happy.

But I did not. It was all over directly. I could not hear what my mother whispered when she kissed me; and all their voices were confused and everything else seemed to have grown still and dull. I might have known all that; but somehow I did not expect it. I had been vexed that the Felkins called me deaf; and now I was hurt at the way in which my brothers and sisters used to find fault with me for not hearing things. Ned said once "none are so deaf as those that won't hear;" and my mother told me, every day, that it was inattention; that if I were not so absent, I should hear as much as anybody else. I don't think I was absent. I know I used to long and to try to hear till I could not help crying; and then I ran and bolted myself into my own room. I think I must have been half crazy then, judging by what I did to my turtle-doves. Peggy had taken very good care of them; and they soon knew me again, and used to perch on my head and my shoulder, as if I had never been away. But their cooing was not the least like what it used to be. I could not hear it at all, unless I put my head against the cage. I could hear some other birds very well; so I fancied it must somehow be the

fault of the doves that they would not coo to me. One day I took one of them out of the cage, and coaxed her at first, and tried every way; and at last I squeezed her throat a little. I suppose I got desperate because she would not coo as I wanted; and I killed her—broke her neck. You all remember about that—how I was punished, and so on; but nobody knew how miserable I was. I will not say any more about that: and I would not have mentioned it but for what it led to.

The first thing that it led to, was, that the whole family were, in a way, afraid of me. The girls used to sink away from me; and never let me play with the baby—as if I should strange that! I used to pretend not to care for being punished; and I know I behaved horribly. One thing was—a very disagreeable thing—that I found father and mother did not know every thing. Till now, I had always thought they did; but, now, they did not know me at all; and that was no great wonder, behaving as I did then. But they used to advise things that were impossible. They used to desire me to ask always what everybody said: but we used to pass, every Sunday, the tombstone of old Miss Chapman; and I remembered how it used to be when anybody saw her coming in at the gate. They used to cry out "O dear, here comes Miss Chapman! What *shall* we do? She will stay till dinner time, and we shall not get back our voices for a week. Well! don't tell her all she asks for. She is never satisfied. Really it is a most dreadful bore," and so on, till she was at the room door. This was because she *would* know everything that everybody said. I could not bear to be like her; and I could not bear now to think how we all used to complain of her. It was only from a sort of feeling then that I did not do what my father and mother told me, and that I was sure they did not understand about it: but now, I see why, and so do they. One can't tell what is worth repeating and what is not. If one never asks, somebody always tells what it is best to tell; but if one is always asking and teasing, people must get as tired of one as we were of poor Miss Chapman.

So, I had to get on all alone. I used to read in a corner, great part of the day; and I used to walk by myself—long walks over the common, while the others used to go together to the meadows, or through the lanes. My father commanded me to go with the rest; and then I used to get another ramble by myself. There was a pond on the common, so far like that one in the lane I spoke of, that it put me in mind of what I mentioned. I used to sit and look into the pond and throw stones in. I began to fancy, now, that I should be happier when I got back to school again. It was very silly when I had once been so disappointed about home; but, I suppose everybody is always hoping for something or other—and I did not know

what else to hope. But I keep getting into disagreeable things and forgetting Charley.

One night when the elder ones were just thinking of going to bed, I came down in my night-clothes, walking in my sleep with my eyes wide open. The stone hall, so cold to my bare feet, awoke me; but yet I could not have been quite awake, for I went into the kitchen instead of up to bed again, and I remember very little about that night. They say I stared at the candles the whole time; but I remember Dr. Robinson being there. I seldom slept well then. I was always dreaming and starting,—dreaming of all sorts of music, and of hearing the wind, and people talking; and then of all sorts of trouble from not being able to hear anybody; and it always ended with a quarrel with Charley, and my knocking him down. But my mother knew nothing of this, and she was as frightened that night as if I had been crazy. The Doctor advised them to send me to school again for one half-year, and see how I got on after some experiments had been tried with my ears. But I want to get on about Charley.

Charley arrived at school, two hours after me. He seemed not to like to shake hands, and he walked away directly. I saw he did not mean to be friends; and I supposed he felt his father's house insulted by my running away. But, I did not know all the reason he had,—neither then, nor for some time after. When we became friends again, I found that Kate had seen how hurt I was at her laughing at me, and that she was so sorry that she went up to my room-door several times, and knocked, and begged that I would forgive her; or that I would open my door, and speak to her, at least. She knocked so loud that she never doubted my hearing her; but I never did, and the next thing was that I ran away. Of course, Charley could not forgive this; he was my great enemy now. In school, he beat me, of course; every body might do that: but I had a chance in things that were not done in class,—such as the Latin essay for a prize, for instance. Charley was bent upon getting that prize, and he thought he should, because, though he was younger than I, he was a good deal before me in school. However, I got the prize; and some of the boys said it was a shame. They thought it was through favour, because I had grown stupid. They said so, and Charley said so; and he provoked me all he could,—more on Kate's account than his own, though, as he told me afterwards. One day, he insulted me so in the play-ground, that I knocked him down. There was no reason why I should not now; for he had grown very much, and was as strong as I had ever been, while I was nothing like so strong as I had been, or as I am now. The moment he was up, he flew at me in the greatest rage that ever you saw. I was the same: and we were hurt enough, I can tell you,—both of us,—so much, that

Mrs. Owen came to see us in our own rooms (for we had not the same room this half-year). We did not want to tell her anything, or to seem to make a party. But she somehow found out that I felt very lonely, and was very unhappy. I am sure it was her doing that the dear, considerate, wise Doctor was so kind to me when I went into the school again,—being very kind to Charley too. He asked me, one afternoon, to go for a drive with him in his gig. The reason he gave was, that his business took him near the place where my father and he used to go to school together; but I believe it was more that we might have a long talk, all by ourselves.

We talked a good deal about some of the fine old heroes, and then about some of the martyrs; and he said, what to be sure is true, that it is an advantage for any one to know clearly, from beginning to end, what his heroism is to be about, that he may arm himself with courage and patience, and be secure against surprises. I began thinking of myself; but I did not suppose *he* did, till it came out by degrees: He thought that deafness and blindness were harder to bear than almost anything. He called them calamities. I can't tell you all he said: he never meant that I should: but he told me the very worst; and he said that he did it on purpose. He told me what a hopeless case he believed mine to be, and what it would cut me off from; but, he said that nothing of the sort could cut a person off from being a hero, and here was the way wide open for me: not for the fame of it, but for the thing itself. I wondered that I had never thought of all that before; but I don't think I shall ever forget it.

Well! When we came back, there was Charley loitering about,—looking for us, clearly. He asked me whether we should be friends. I was very willing, of course: and it was still an hour to supper; so we went and sat on the wall under the apple-tree, and talked over everything. There, we found how much we had both been mistaken, and that we did not really hate one another at all. Ever since that, I have liked him better than ever I did before, and that is saying a great deal. He never triumphs over me now; and he tells me fifty things a-day that he never used to think of. He says I used to look as if I did not like to be spoken to; but that I have chipped up wonderfully. And I know that he has given up his credit and his pleasure, many a time, to help me, and to stay by me. He will not have that trouble at school again, as I am not going back; but I know how it will be at Charley's home, this time. I know it, by his saying that Kate will never laugh at me again. I believe she might, for that matter. At least, I think I could stand most people's laughing, now. Father and mother, and everybody, know that the whole thing is quite altered now, and that Charley and I shall never quarrel again. I shall not run away from that house again,—nor from

any other house. It is so much better to look things in the face! How you all nod, and agree with me!

THE GUEST'S STORY.

ABOUT twenty years ago, I was articled clerk in the small seaport town of Muddleborough, half rural, half fishing, with a small remains of once profitable smuggling, and a few reminiscences of successful privateering, to which one street and several public-houses owed their foundation. The rector, the banker, the lawyer—my master, who had the tin cases of half the county, in the dusty dining-room that formed his office—the doctor, and the owner of the two brigs and a schooner which composed the mercantile navy, were the acknowledged heads of our town.

It was a moot point whether the banker or my master, the lawyer, were the greater man. The banker, Isaac Scrawby, was supposed to be of boundless wealth; it was before the time of Joint-stock Banks, and there was not a farmer or a fisherman who did not prefer Scrawby's torn, dingy notes, to the newest Bank of England. His paper was the stock of canvas bags, and was hoarded away in old women's worsted stockings; as was plainly shown when he stopped payment in the first crisis after Peel's Bill, and paid three shillings in the pound. But then, Lawyer Closeleigh, my master, besides being able to lend everybody money, knew all the secrets of the county, and had a hand in everything—except the births, which he left to the doctor.

There were three or four clerks who jogged through the business. Old Closeleigh generally wore a green coat with gilt basket buttons: breeches, and top-boots; seldom sat down or took up a pen except to write a letter to a great client; but held audiences on market days, and gave advice, and took instructions at coverside in the hunting season.

As a large premium had been paid with me, of course I did nothing; an attempt was made while I was yet green, by old Founart, the common law clerk, to induce me to serve writs; but, that having failed, I was left to take care of one of the rooms of the deserted mansion which formed our office, and to entertain the clients who were shown in to wait their turn.

Dyness and respectability were the characteristics of our town. We had few poor, or if we had, we never heard much about them. The same people went through the same duties and the same serious amusements, all the year round. The commencement of the fishing season, and the annual fair, were our only events. There were no fortunes made or lost. Smuggling, under the modern arrangements, had become too hazardous and low for respectable people to venture on, although there were strange stories afloat, as to the adventures of the fathers of the present generation.

Every year, the more restless and ambitious young men of all classes swarmed away to regions where industry was more active. In a word, "our town" was the quietest, sleepest collection of plodding, saving, non-speculating folks, whose utmost efforts enabled them to keep the town-pump in repair; and the roof of the town-hall water-tight; but, who could never be induced to raise money enough to build a much needed pier, or to re-mit the town dues, in order to induce a steamboat—a recent innovation which passed our port—to call in and open up competition with the slow sailing coasters on which we were dependent for communication with the next town.

Into this English Sleepy Hollow, there came one day—whether by land or water, in a fishing-boat, or on his sturdy legs, never was known—a tall, thin, pale, bronzed, soldier-like looking man, between forty and fifty years of age: with one hand, and an iron hook screwed on a wooden block where his other should have been; scantily dressed in a half-soiled, half gamekeeper suit.

A party, including the parson, the doctor, and my master, Mr. Closeleigh, were going out shooting over a famous woodcock cover, and were lamenting aloud the absence of old Phil Snare—the best beater in the county—when the one-armed man offered his services, in a manner so neat, civil, and respectful, that, although there was a slight taste of brogue in his accent, and ours was a county where wandering Irishmen were not held in much favour, they were accepted. A long hazel wand was soon in his hand; and, before the day was over, it was universally acknowledged that one-handed Peter was the best beater, and the most amusing handy fellow, that any of the party had ever known. According to his story, he was a pensioned soldier proceeding to visit a relation whom he hoped to find well settled at a town a hundred miles to the north. A glass of grog opened his mouth, and he related with great tact a few of his adventures.

From that day, Peter became the odd-man of the town, and every one wondered how we had done so long without so useful a personage. He carried letters, he cleaned guns, he manufactured flies for fishing, he doctored dogs, he brought the messages of wives—wrapped in a droll envelope of his own—to dilatory husbands delaying at club dinners; he took the place of the doctor's boy, and the lawyer's, too; was always ready with a grave face and a droll answer; was never tired, and seldom in a hurry. He walked in and out of all houses like a tame cat, and made a capital living, as all people do who manage to become the indispensable solvers of difficulties.

In a very short time Peter had emerged, a very butterfly, from the grub or chrysalis state. The ragged shooting-jacket was discarded for a green coat of loose fit and

many pockets, smart enough for my Lord Browne's head gamekeeper. An open waistcoat displayed highly respectable linen; from head to foot he showed the advantage of being on good credit with the best tradesmen; and yet he owned no master. He began to give up carrying messages, except for the "fust of the quality;" had a staff of boys, to whom he gave orders; and, when out on a shooting party, carried a capital gun—the property of a sporting publican—with the air of one who came out purely for health, exercise, and sport; and not the least like the half-starved ragged creature who had been too happy to sleep in a barn, and accept a plate of broken meat.

But, the favour in which Peter was held was not confined to our sportsmen; he seemed equally taken into the confidence of those who never handled a gun or threw a fly. He began with the smallest tradesmen, but grew daily more indispensable to our most topping shopkeepers. Mr. Tammy, the draper in the market-place, who always wore a white cravat and pumps, was seen walking in his garden with Peter for an hour one evening, by Miss Spark, who peeped through a hole in the garden door; and she declared that Peter at parting patted Tammy on the back—yet he was churchwarden that year! This story was at first disbelieved, although it was remarked that Peter's improvement in hosiery dated from that garden walk. Soon afterwards, Kigine, our head chemist and druggist, a great orator at parish meetings, and a scientific authority, was observed by his errand-boy studying geography, with a large map before him: over which Peter's iron hook travelled with great rapidity. From that time, the whole town seemed seized with a rage for refreshing its geographical studies. Spain and Portugal were the special localities in favour; the demand for books on the Peninsular War became great at the circulating library; and the bookseller in the market received orders for not less than three Portuguese dictionaries, in one week.

As for Peter, he became a lion of the first magnitude. He breakfasted with Smoker, the sporting publican—dined with Tiles the shoemaker—took tea with Jolly the butcher—supped with Kinine the druggist—and held chats with Smooth the barber, and Mr. Closeleigh himself. Ostensibly, he was asked to relate the stories of his campaigns, which he did with great unction; and, strangely enough, people never seemed tired of hearing of Peter's marches, Peter's battles, and how Peter lost his hand. It was remarked by the curious, that these battle stories always ended in Peter's being taken mysteriously into some back parlour or garden, there to whisper for an hour or two with the head of the house over a pipe and strong waters; though no one ever saw Peter the worse for liquor. No, Peter

always seemed to imbibe silence with his grog.

At length, in spite of very vigorous attempts at mystery, it began to be whispered about, that Peter was the owner of a valuable secret concerning a treasure buried in the wars. People not yet in his confidence pooh-poohed the idea, and yet Peter's friends increased in number daily.

For my own part, I had not yet arrived at the money-hunting age; my heart was then all upon horses and dogs, embroidered waistcoats, and Albanian fancy dresses: with some dreams of Guinares and Medoras, and pretty Annie Blondie, the rector's daughter. A hidden treasure did not excite me to desire Peter's patronage, nearly so much as his skill in dressing a Mayfly. As it happened, my passion for fishing let me into the secret which had been travelling up and down the best streets of our town.

One fine summer's evening I had been trying all I knew, without success, to inveigle a great four pound trout, who kept lazily rising and sinking at the far side of a deep pool, under the overhanging roots of a gnarled willow-tree; when Peter, stealing with his quiet lengthy stride across the grass, made his appearance at my elbow suddenly.

"Will you let me try, Master Charles, what I can do with the big rogue?"

I did let him, and he dropped the fly—a fly of his own making—just behind the big trout, as light as thistle-down; one dash, one splash; and in ten minutes the trout was safe under my landing net, flapping out his life on the grass.

"Always throw just behind them big 'uns, Master Charles, and they'll take sure enough, but they won't look at a fly just before them. Same as rich men for that!" added Peter, with a chuckle.

This triumph over the trout led the way to chat on the grass, and, little by little, we got at last to Peter's battles in Spain and Portugal. I cannot do justice to Peter's oily flattery, and the sympathy he expressed for a real gentleman and a sportsman: not like the poor mean beggars of peddling shopkeepers. He made me understand that I was one who would spend money in true style if I had it; and then, after hinting that a beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood had confided to Peter—every one did confide in Peter—her preference for Master Charles, with many artful round-about he confided to me the following story; the key to the favour he had acquired among all ranks of the good people of Muddleborough.

Peter declared that during the retreat to Torres Vedras, he and two other comrades were entrusted with the care of a waggon laden with boxes of gold doubloons; that in a skirmish they had retreated for safety to a convent, and there tilted the waggon-load, all but one box, into a deep convent well. The same day, all his companions were killed

in action, and he was wounded and laid in the hospital. At this point of his story he exhibited a ghastly scar in his side.

The one box they had partly divided amongst them, and partly buried. He had, on recovery, been sent to join his regiment, and marched to the Pyrenees and Toulouse: where he lost his hand. On his arrival in England he was discharged with a pension (here he produced papers); he had after long trials succeeded in getting back to Portugal; he had found the Convent deserted, and the well half filled with rubbish; he had discovered, too, the small parcel of doubloons, but found that it would require the influence of some real gentleman to get the treasure out of the well, and out of the country. When his romance had proceeded thus far, he produced from some recondite part of his garments, wrapped in many rags, a real golden doubloon.

Who could disbelieve so circumstantial a story, supported by so much evidence? He went on to say that the publican, the druggist, the shoemaker, the gunsmith, and many others, were all anxious to go in partnership, and start for Portugal; that Mr. Tammy was willing to advance something handsome on the speculation; but that he preferred dealing with a young gentleman of spirit, and that if I could persuade my rich aunt to advance the money necessary for the journey—a trifle of two hundred pounds—he was willing to give up the handsome offers of Tammy, Kinine, Tiles, Smoker, and all the rest of them; and set out with me, secretly and alone, to rifle this new cave of Aladdin. His plans were very complete. We were to hire a vineyard—part of the old convent grounds—and, after getting up the treasure, were to pack it in Port-wine casks with double bottoms, and then, returning, share the spoil. I was to marry a beautiful lady, keep a pack of hounds, and be the head of the county; while Peter was modest and would be quite satisfied with enough to maintain a horse, a couple of setters, and the life of a squireen.

The romance was well put together and most insinuatingly told; but, I was rather too young, too indifferent, too merry, and too full of little minor schemes, to bite. Besides, I did not think that my Aunt Rebecca would give me two hundred pounds to go to Portugal with a strange Irishman; and I did not quite like the notion of leaving my favourite Annie Blondie to the exclusive care of my rival, the young curate. So, after giving Peter my honour that I would not reveal the momentous secret to any living soul, we parted at the Fisherman Tavern: where I paid for divers glasses of grog, and presented Peter with the only half-sovereign I was likely to have that week.

In the course of the month Peter was missing. It was observed that all his patrons—Smoker, and Tiles, Jolly, Kinine, and Tammy—looked particularly pleased and

mysterious when they heard others wonder at his disappearance without beat of drum.

About a week after Peter's departure, Mrs. Jolly went to Mrs. Smoker to know if she had seen anything of her husband. Mrs. Smoker had not. Had Mrs. Jolly seen anything of that brute Smoker? The two wives compared notes: both husbands had been selling and raising money. Smoker had raffled his favourite mare Slap Bang, and Jolly had collected all his largest Midsummer bills, and taken her (Mrs. Jolly's) grandfather's silver tankard. Both had packed up their Sunday clothes, saddles, and guns. There was a terrible hue and cry, which was not mollified when letters came from the two absconding husbands—one dated London, and the other Liverpool—stating that they had only gone to make their fortunes by a safe speculation, and would be back in three months. Peter had been suspected; but, what was odd, they both asked after Peter, and desired—the one, that he might have the run of the ale-tap; the other, that he might have a bit of beef or mutton if he wanted it.

In the midst of the hubbub, Peter got down one morning from the top of the coach from the neighbouring town of Fuddleborough, and crept into the midst of the gossips at the Horse and Jockey before they were aware of him. His story was very short and straightforward; he had only been to draw his pension; and he had seen Jolly at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden very drunk, but had not spoken to him. In less than an hour he was closeted with Kinine, and he spent the evening with the Churchwarden.

In another week it was announced that Mr. Kinine had sold his business, and was leaving the town for good. Some said he was going to study for a physician; some said he had inherited—others said he was ruined. At any rate he left, and was never seen at Muddleborough any more. The last time I heard of him he was lecturing on Electro-Biology—or anything else—at mit-tance twopence.

Very oddly, on the same week in which Kinine gave up to his successor, Bluster, who still keeps the establishment, Tammy the Churchwarden went off to Manchester—to buy goods, as he said, although it was not his time of the year for buying. He left the shop in charge of young Binks, who afterwards married Mrs. Tammy. Tammy was away, six months; during the whole of which period poor Mrs. Tammy claimed to be distracted; and when he came back he was "as thin as a weasel, as bald as a coot, and as yellow as a guinea." So Miss Spark declared; but very few people saw him, for he took to his bed and died: raving about treasure-waggons, and the villain Peter, and doubloons. The day he was buried, it all came out. Tammy had been to Portugal with Peter; who, after travelling up the country, had handed him over to the police as a heretic-spy, and had departed with

mules, baggage, and all the money that was to have been spent on the vineyard, the castle with double bottoms, the waggons, and the rest of the complete arrangements.

Poor Tammy, when discharged, had almost to beg his way to Oporto; and there, the first person he saw was Kinine, inquiring at the police-office for the scoundrel Peter, who, after a jollification in London had marched off with his trunks and bank-bills—the produce of his business—to join Tammy.

When poor Mrs. Tammy told this tale at the funeral breakfast, the murder came out. Peter had bamboozled the whole village. Everybody, from the cobbler to the parson, had made an investment in the Portuguese treasure-well. Smoker went through the Gazette; Jolly had to discharge his journeyman and do his own killing; every one had paid something for listening to Peter's stories. He had swept the old womens' stocking hoards, and the servant-girls' riband savings; he had had fifty pounds and some tracts from the Rector, and close as much, and a pew gun from Mr. Closeleigh. The banker had given him a hundred pounds in his own one-pound notes. The village schoolmaster had lent him his only five pounds. In fact, he found our town a perfect bank of credulity, and he had drained it dry.

But Peter had committed no legal offence: he had only told lies and borrowed money. I heard of him from time to time, always as being successful, until a few years ago, when he made the mistake of taking a keen American whom he picked up in a railway-carriage, to Oporto. On this occasion, the American came back and Peter did not. When asked after his friend, the American composedly remarked, "That having had a difficulty with Peter, he had been obliged to shoot him."

THE MOTHER'S STORY.

THE traveller, of reverend mien,
A wanderer from his youth had been;
Dwelt in the desert and the wood,
Escaped from earthquake, fire and flood;
And each dark point, each vivid hue,

That lay on his wild pilgrimage,
Had melted to a moonlight view—

A quiet, beautiful old age.
And travel to his heart had brought
A world-wide stretch of kindly thought;
Had given his reconciling eye
Almost the tone of infancy.

And he could make the cheek turn pale,
Yet better loved some gentle tale

Of love and truth to tell,
O'er which his heart refreshed would stay,
As traveller on some dusty way
Might linger by a well.

And such a tale the ancient man
Here, at our fireside once began:—

It was my lot, 'mid Western woods,
To form a friendship firm and dear;

How oft in those vast solitudes
 A friend is sooner found than here !
 It was a youth of noble blood
 Who chose, in his romantic mood,
 In hunter's hut to dwell ;
 A gifted youth of bearing high,
 A free, proud step, a glancing eye—
 His name was Claude d'Estrelle.
 His heart had found him one who made
 Those solitary places glad ;
 A hunter's orphan—left, while young,
 Her Indian mother's tribe among—
 Who saw him dying on the waste,
 And on her fearless bosom placed
 His fevered head, and touched his brow
 With hands as cool and soft as snow ;
 And when, at his first conscious waking,
 He saw his guardian of the woods,
 In whose dark eye a hope was breaking
 Like moonlight over dusky floods,
 While tears of mingled joy and doubt
 Down from the heavy lashes ran,
 As though her heart was flowing out
 In pity for the lonely man—
 His mov'd soul vowed that maiden brave
 Should own the life she tried to save.
 So Leena, ere that summer fled,
 The noble Claude d'Estrelle had wed.

On one of those red autumn eves—
 That gorgeous time of forest life—
 Amid its wealth of changing leaves
 I first beheld my friend's young wife.
 We met upon an open glade,
 Whence lines of brown and purple shade
 Their long, soft swelling vistas made
 Up to the evening sky.
 And, while we gazed, some dim arcade
 Would kindle suddenly,
 And gleaming orange grove o'er grove
 Seem vying with the clouds above :
 While crimson foliage, here and there,
 Would deepen in the amber air,
 And drops of glory fall between
 On many a glistening evergreen ;
 The waterfall to jewels turned,
 The lake like one great ruby burned
 Upon the wood's green breast ;
 And all that 'wondering splendour seemed
 As still as something we had dreamed ;
 The leaf's light flutter to the ground
 Became a noticeable sound,
 So silent was its rest !
 And Leena's figure, lithe and tall,
 Against the glowing background stood :—
 Well might her husband ask if all
 The dames that tread in courtly hall
 Could match his lady of the wood ;
 There, wearing for her coronet
 Her own rich bands of wavy jet ;
 Soft as the fawn's tear eye,
 A colour on the clear brown cheek
 Like evening's last faint crimson streak
 Upon the twilight sky.
 Long, pleasant nights with Claude I passed
 In his rude dwelling on the waste,
 Beside the fire of pines :
 While Leena's graceful tenderness
 Wreathed round him like the light caress
 Of her own forest vine ;
 And love's strange magic seemed to shut
 A palace in that woodland hut,

While we would stop our talk, to hear
 The distant rushing of the deer,
 The sound of falling water near ;
 And Leena, happy as a child,
 Brought for us from her native wild
 The gatherings of her heart :
 Soft gushes of melodious thought
 Deep poetry within her wrought,
 By living long apart.
 While Claude's bright smiles fell fond and fast
 Upon his dear enthusiast,
 And, all untrained, he loved to find
 Those blossoms of the uncultured mind,
 And thought not how the world might try
 The spirit of his untalented wife,
 Though all who looked on Leena's eye
 Might feel some destined agony
 Lay folded in her life.
 Such a high power of deathless love
 Did in its depths unfathomed move ;
 It seemed for special trials given,
 The boon of a foreseeing Heaven.

That time of trial came at last,
 When five delightful years had passed,
 And I had wandered wide.
 A second time Claude laid to rest
 His sick head on that faithful breast ;
 So rested till he died.
 Then she unto his brother went,
 With those his dying breath had sent—
 Her children twain, a welcome prize—
 The last of that proud race.
 But there were none but scornful eyes
 For her woe-printed face ;
 And back he harshly bade her go,
 That those she bore might yet outgrow
 The sense of her disgrace.
 What ! leave them ? Claude's dear legacy !
 How could she let the mother die
 In such a loving heart ?
 But, with an uncomplaining eye,
 (Despair had taught her art,)
 She begged a little while to stay,
 And stole them in the night away,
 And hid them in the wood ;
 Seven days and nights, was sorely pressed,
 And then, beside her rifled nest,
 A childless mother stood !
 But when her love's strong crying still
 Did too much chafe the iron will,
 He gave her, with an ample bribe,
 Unto a stranger Indian tribe
 A slave oppressed to be ;
 For there her white blood was her shame ;
 But woman's heart, whatever her name,
 Indian, or English, is the same—
 A mother set her free.
 She tracked them to a distant state
 By many a wild and dangerous way,
 And prayed the tyrant of her fate
 That she, among his slaves, might stay
 Near her beloved ones, though she bore
 A mother's precious name no more.
 He suffered her to take her part
 Upon the slave's tear-watered soil ;
 So little knew the mother's heart,
 He thought to tire it out by toil.
 But, stronger than the strong man's will,
 Her children's love would own her still.
 He felt the taint must on them lie
 Till he had quenched her memory,

So secretly he sent her where
 'Neath Afric's hot unwholesome air
 A wild plantation lay;
 A fearful place of toil and tears,
 Where, how she lived for twenty years,
 Sure only God might say.
 To cheer her lonely banishment
 A dream of Claude Ile nightly sent,
 And of the little children too;
 (For in her heart they never grew.)
 Oh, what sick thoughts wore out her prime!
 The long, long wasting of the time!
 The dark hair changed, the eyesight dim
 Had spent itself in tears;
 But still her firm and patient hope
 Grew stronger as each slender prop
 Fell from it with the years;
 And o'er her love, time harmless fled;
 Absence but nursed it, tears but shed
 A rainbow glory on its head;
 And hardship, pain, and cruelty,
 Proved it, to find it could not die.
 Her life did but one thought contain—
 To see her children once again.
 For twenty years she strove, and then
 At last she reached the shore;
 Heaven put it in a sailor's heart
 To let her in his ship depart,
 And seek her lost, once more.

She reached home with the closing year;
 Oh, had they died, those children dear?
 Had they forgotten? No! not *her*!
 To them she begged her way along;
 Her earnest purpose made her strong;
 Some careless strangers gave her ear
 News that it burned and thrilled to hear;
 How, when years past, her old foe died,
 Another childless brother tried
 To bring her children to his side;
 And how her son right gladly went
 Into his forest settlement.
 Some said he lived a hunter wild,
 And some that he had died a child.
 Then of her daughter;—she had stayed
 The treasure of her wealthy home,
 And grown so beautiful, they said.
 Enough! For nought she has not come.
 The high heart throbs, the dark eyes fill;
 Then one at least is living still!

Anon, beside a lady fair
 Stood Leena in a splendid room;
 Gazed on the curls of auburn hair,
 The lustrous eyes, the flushing bloom,
 With half a sigh to think how wild
 Her fancy, that a little child
 Might meet her at the door,
 That might be petted and caressed,
 And nestle in its mother's breast,
 As in the days of yore.
 And yet 'twas with a joyful thrill
 Of pride she saw her beauty still.
 "Leena!" She does not turn as though
 It was her name. Poor mother, no!
 Alas for thee! that cold surprise,
 So unbelieving, so unmoved—
 How can she, with her father's eyes,
 Look strangely on the face he loved?
 The little dream-child she hath lost—
 And yet may no new daughter find?
 It cannot be; she hath a host
 Of memories to wake her mind.*

Sure she has but to prove her claim!
 She knows not yet the mother's name.
 She clasped her knees, to melt her pride
 With Love's pathetic questions tried,
 Pausing between them to espy
 Some little softening in the eye.
 Had she not seen the eyes before her
 At childish wakings bending o'er her?
 Had not these hands her baby head
 With forest blossoms often spread?
 And then that tune—her father's tune!
 How it had been her nightly boon,
 To hear it as she sank to rest?

An impulse moved the loving breast,
 That tune. "T was but a lullaby;
 But she to turn the air would try,
 And nature's sleeping sympathies
 Beneath the sweet old notes might rise.
 "T was a quaint fancy as might be,
 And born of love's credulity,
 That song—oh, how it trembled up!

It almost seemed a sighing—
 The farewell of departing Hope
 While Joy and Love lay dying.
 A common tune it scarce could be;
 The heart had set the homely words
 To an impassioned melody

That swept from its excited chords;
 That, and the face so grave and meek,
 The wistful eye, the changing cheek,
 Made such a touching spell,
 The longing hand was fondly laid
 Upon her daughter's haughty head,
 And there she let it dwell.
 Yes, Childhood's love seemed springing there.
 But, hush! a step upon the stair
 That daughter loveth well.
 And he, she knows his title high
 Would ne'er to Indian blood ally,
 Her pride, her love, are all at stake;
 She strives the kindly spell to break.
 Tells Leena, with some natural pain,
 That they must never meet again;
 And offers—insult strange and cold—
 To buy her secrecy with gold.

The mother fled, as one afraid,
 Two days and nights: and never stayed
 Her hot and panting feet.
 It was the time of festival,
 And doors and hearts were open all,
 And friend with friend did greet.
 The light and warmth around her glowed,
 While hers was still the frozen road—
 An emblem of her fate.
 And yet the broad, unsleeping eye
 That guides the sparrows in the sky,
 Did on her footsteps wait.

She sank beneath an oak tree bare,
 On the third night, she knew not where.
 The pure snow seemed the only thing
 To her sick heart's imagining
 That had not changed; and she would lie
 Upon its quiet breast, and die.

A little further, sinking heart!
 To the next turning only press;
 "T's hard that thou shouldst die; thou art
 But one stone's throw from happiness!
 Hush! rising on the frosty air,
 It is a Christmas hymn!

The kindly sounds have reached her there ;

Have roused a feeling dim,
Amid the loneliness of death,
That some one, on a prayerful breath,
Her passing soul might bear ;
Perhaps through her exhausted frame
Some strong, mysterious impulse came
From Him who brought her there.

And, in its strength, she dragged her feet
Bound to a straggling village street,
And reached a house of prayer.

She saw not how red men and white,
(The sudden glow, the glare of light,
Those heavy eyes made blind),
Were stirring, neath the breath intense
Of one young preacher's eloquence
Like corn before the wind.

At last the listless ear was met

By one consoling word :

" A mother ; yea, *she* may forget :
I will not, saith the Lord."

And, from the preacher's lips there sprung

The grand poetic Indian tongue,
The while his reaching fancy strove
To paint that holiest earthly love—
A mother's ; and he told a tale
So like her own it made her veil

Her eyes, lest, with a look at him,
She might dispel a blissful dream.

And, as her ear the rich voice drank,
A wild hope, with it, rose and sank,
And thus unto an end he drew :

" Her fate, oh, would to God I knew !

Alive, or dead, I cannot tell ;

But well I know that mother's love
Here pining, or at peace above,

Hath not forgotten *Claude d'Estrelle* !"

She made no cry, she heard the name ;

A little lower sank her head :

A gentle pause of being came,

And well it did, or life had fled.

No other words, nor prayer, nor hymn,

Nor gathering feet the long trance broke,

Till, with each sense confused and dim,

At last upon his arm she woke,

And saw compassion soft and warm

Rain o'er her from his full dark eye,

And felt as one beneath a charm,

Content for ever thus to lie :

Her heart so weak with the excess

Of its unspoken happiness.

Yet, from her lips his own words fell—

" Hath not forgotten *Claude d'Estrelle*."

And then her shaking hand did seek

To part his hair, to touch his cheek ;

The voice, the touch, the loving eyes,
Did link up broken memories

That could not be withstood ;

His life with Nature and with Heaven

To him had quick perceptions given :

His heart was at the flood ;

It moved him on, he could not speak,

But, with strong weeping clasped her neck.

And sobbing women, at the scene,

Dropped tear for tear with hardened men ;

And e'en the Indians of the wood

Like weeping children round them stood

Till one old thankful heart did stay

The whirl of joy, with " Let us pray !"

But oh, that quiet, joyful night,

While *Claude* and his fair girlish wife
Moved round her with such proud delight ;

Now stopped to weep at her past life,

Now gently chafed the blistered feet,

None between them moved her seat ;

Now, as they sat, the way-worn brow

Was pressed against the golden hair

Or to the blooming cheek ; and now

Claude's glowing lips were meeting there

Of Christmas hearths there never abate

A brighter, dearer, happier one.

I heard this story when I came—

In part from *Claude*, in part from one

Who called upon her mother's name

With deep remorse and burning shame,

When friend and hireling all were gone,

And he, who but her gold had wed,

Approached not her infected bed.

Oh, for that one kind face that she

So harshly drove away !

That sad, heart-breaking melody

Did haunt her while she lay.

I went for *Leena*, and she came—

(Hers the true love that does not blame,

That " suffers and is kind ")—

Touched the parched lips, and knew no fear,

Though Death was kissing them with her ;

Poured on the fevered mind

The dew of her forgiving love,

Till there *Heaven's* olive branch and dove

A resting-place did find.

And but one fancy did remain—

To hear that cradle hymn again.

And *Leena* would not that she died

With her last wish ungratified ;

So—trembling, through that silent room,

Amid Death's deeply gathering gloom—

Sang with calm lips her favorite strain,

But with a heavy heart again :

Full well we knew the closing ear

Would lose it all too soon ;

That she, as its last notes drew near,

Was dying with the tune.

And when the lullaby had ceased,

We saw she had been sung to rest.

Leena and I met once again.

A pleasant evening, after rain

And storm, her latter life hath been ;

I watched her bend her eyes serene

Upon the Book of Life,

And asked myself could they have seen

So much of pain and strife ?

And children's children unto her

As loving little teachers were ;

A very presence from above,

That simple woman's faith and love.

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THE SCHOOLBOY'S STORY.

BEING rather young at present—I am getting on in years, but still I am rather young—I have no particular adventures of my own to fall back upon. It wouldn't much interest anybody here, I suppose, to know what a screw the Reverend is, or what a griffin *she* is, or how they do stick it into parents—particularly hair-cutting, and medical attendance. One of our fellows was charged in his half's account twelve and sixpence for two pills—tolerably profitable at six and threepence a-piece, I should think—and he never took them either, but put them up the sleeve of his jacket.

As to the beef, it's shameful. It's *not* beef. Regular beef isn't veins. You can chew regular beef. Besides which, there's gravy to regular beef, and you never see a drop to ours. Another of our fellows went home ill, and heard the family doctor tell his father that he couldn't account for his complaint unless it was the beer. Of course it was the beer, and well it might be!

However, beef and Old Cheeseman are two different things. So is beer. It was Old Cheeseman I meant to tell about; not the manner in which our fellows get their constitutions destroyed for the sake of profit.

Why, look at the pie-crust alone. There's no flakiness in it. It's solid—like damp lead. Then our fellows get nightmares, and are bolstered for calling out and waking other fellows. Who can wonder!

Old Cheeseman one night walked in his sleep, put his hat on over his night-cap, got hold of a fishing-rod and a cricket-bat, and went down into the parlour, where they naturally thought from his appearance he was a Ghost. Why, he never would have done that, if his meals had been wholesome. When we all begin to walk in our sleeps, I suppose they'll be sorry for it.

Old Cheeseman wasn't second Latin Master then; he was a fellow himself. He was first

brought there, very small, in a post-chaise, by a woman who was always taking snuff and shaking him—and that was the most he remembered about it. He never went home for the holidays. His accounts (he never learnt any extras) were sent to a Bank, and the Bank paid them; and he had a brown suit twice a year, and went into boots at twelve. They were always too big for him, too.

In the Midsummer holidays, some of our fellows who lived within walking distance, used to come back and climb the trees outside the playground wall, on purpose to look at Old Cheeseman reading there by himself. He was always as mild as the tea—and *that's* pretty mild, I should hope!—so when they whistled to him, he looked up and nodded; and when they said "Halloa Old Cheeseman, what have you had for dinner?" he said "Boiled mutton;" and when they said "An't it solitary, Old Cheeseman?" he said "It is a little dull, sometimes;" and then they said "Well, good bye, Old Cheeseman!" and climbed down again. Of course it was imposing on Old Cheeseman to give him nothing but boiled mutton through a whole Vacation, but that was just like the system. When they didn't give him boiled mutton they gave him rice pudding, pretending it was a treat. And saved the butcher.

So Old Cheeseman went on. The holidays brought him into other trouble besides the loneliness; because when the fellows began to come back, not wanting to, he was always glad to see them: which was aggravating when they were not at all glad to see him, and so he got his head knocked against walls, and that was the way his nose bled. But he was a favourite in general. Once, a subscription was raised for him; and, to keep up his spirits, he was presented before the holidays with two white mice, a rabbit, a pigeon, and a beautiful puppy. Old Cheeseman cried about it—especially soon afterwards, when they all ate one another.

Of course Old Cheeseman used to be called by the names of all sorts of cheeses—Double Gloucesterman, Family Cheshireman, Dutchman, North Wiltshireman, and all that. But he never minded it. And I don't mean to say he was old in point of years—because he wasn't—only he was called, from the first, Old Cheeseman.

At last, Old Cheeseman was made second Latin Master. He was brought in one morning at the beginning of a new half, and presented to the school in that capacity as "Mr. Cheeseman." Then our fellows all agreed that Old Cheeseman was a spy, and a deserter, who had gone over to the enemy's camp, and sold himself for gold. It was no excuse for him that he had sold himself for very little gold—two pound ten a quarter, and his washing, as was reported. It was decided by a Parliament which sat about it, that Old Cheeseman's mercenary motives could alone be taken into account, and that he had "coined our blood for drachmas." The Parliament took the expression out of the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius.

When it was settled in this strong way that Old Cheeseman was a tremendous traitor, who had wormed himself into our fellows' secrets on purpose to get himself into favour by giving up everything he knew, all courageous fellows were invited to come forward and enrol themselves in a Society for making a set against him. The President of the Society was First boy, named Bot-Tarter. His father was in the West Indies, and he owned, himself, that his father was worth Millions. He had great power among our fellows, and he wrote a parody, beginning,

"Who made believe to be so meek
That we could hardly hear him speak,
Yet turned out an Informing Sneak?
Old Cheeseman."

—and on in that way through more than a dozen verses, which he used to go and sing, every morning, close by the new master's desk. He trained one of the low boys too, a rosy cheeked little Brass who didn't care what he did, to go up to him with his Latin Grammar one morning, and say it so:—*Nominativus pronominum*—Old Cheeseman, *raro exprimitur*—was never suspected, *nisi distinctionis*—of being an informer, *aut emphasis gratia*—until he proved one. *Ut*—for instance, *Vos damnastis*—when he sold the boys. *Quasi*—as though, *dicat*—he should say, *Preterea nemo*—I'm a Judas! All this produced a great effect on Old Cheeseman. He had never had much hair; but what he had, began to get thinner and thinner every day. He grew paler and more worn; and sometimes of an evening he was seen sitting at his desk with a precious long snuff to his candle, and his hands before his face, crying. But no member of the Society could pity him, even if he felt inclined, because the President said it was Old Cheeseman's conscience.

So Old Cheeseman went on, and didn't he lead a miserable life! Of course the Reverend turned up his nose at him, and of course she did—because both of them always do that, at all the masters—but he suffered from the fellows most, and he suffered from them constantly. He never told about it, that the Society could find out; but he got no credit for that, because the President said it was Old Cheeseman's cowardice.

He had only one friend in the world, and that one was almost as powerless as he was, for it was only Jane. Jane was a sort of a wardrobe-woman to our fellows, and took care of the boxes. She had come at first, I believe, as a kind of apprentice—some of our fellows say from a Charity, but I don't know—and after her time was out, 'had stopped at so much a year. So little a year, perhaps I ought to say, for it is far more likely. However, she had put some pounds in the Savings' Bank, and she was a very nice young woman. She was not quite pretty; but she had a very frank, honest, bright face, and all our fellows were fond of her. She was uncommonly neat and cheerful, and uncommonly comfortable and kind. And if anything was the matter with a fellow's mother, he always went and showed the letter to Jane.

Jane was Old Cheeseman's friend. The more the Society went against him, the more Jane stood by him. She used to give him a good-humoured look out of her still-room window, sometimes, that seemed to set him up for the day. She used to pass out of the orchard and the kitchen-garden (always kept locked, I believe you!) through the playground, when she might have gone the other way, only to give a turn of her head, as much as to say "Keep up your spirits!" to Old Cheeseman. His slip of a room was so fresh and orderly, that it was well known who looked after it while he was at his desk; and when our fellows saw a smoking hot dumpling on his plate at dinner, they knew with indignation who had sent it up.

Under these circumstances, the Society resolved, after a quantity of meeting and debating, that Jane should be requested to cut Old Cheeseman dead; and that if she refused, she must be sent to Coventry herself. So a deputation, headed by the President, was appointed to wait on Jane, and inform her of the vote the Society had been under the painful necessity of passing. She was very much respected for all her good qualities, and there was a story about her having once waylaid the Reverend in his own study and got a fellow off from severe punishment, of her own kind comfortable heart. So the deputation didn't much like the job. However they went up, and the President told Jane all about it. Upon which Jane turned very red, burst into tears, informed the President and the deputation in a way not at all like her usual way, that

they were a parcel of malicious young savages, and turned the whole respected body out of the room. Consequently it was entered in the Society's book (kept in astronomical cypher for fear of detection), that all communication with Jane was interdicted; and the President addressed the members on this convincing instance of Old Cheeseman's undermining.

But Jane was as true to Old Cheeseman as Old Cheeseman was false to our fellows—in their opinion at all events—and steadily continued to be his only friend. It was a great exasperation to the Society, because Jane was as much a loss to them as she was a gain to him; and being more inveterate against him than ever, they treated him worse than ever. At last, one morning, his desk stood empty, his room was peeped into and found to be vacant, and a whisper went about among the pale faces of our fellows that Old Cheeseman, unable to bear it any longer, had got up early and drowned himself.

The mysterious looks of the other masters after breakfast, and the evident fact that Old Cheeseman was not expected, confirmed the Society in this opinion. Some began to discuss whether the President was liable to hanging or only transportation for life, and the President's face showed a great anxiety to know which. However, he said that a jury of his country should find him game; and that in his address he should put it to them to lay their hands upon their hearts, and say whether they as Britons approved of Informers, and how they thought they would like it themselves. Some of the Society considered that he had better run away until he found a Forest, where he might change clothes with a woodcutter and stain his face with blackberries; but the majority believed that if he stood his ground, his father—belonging as he did to the West Indies, and being worth Millions—could buy him off.

All our fellows' hearts beat fast when the Reverend came in, and made a sort of a Roman, or a Field Marshal, of himself with the ruler; as he always did before delivering an address. But their fears were nothing to their astonishment when he came out with the story that Old Cheeseman, "so long our respected friend and fellow-pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge," he called him—O yes! I dare say! Much of that!—was the orphan child of a disinherited young lady who had married against her father's wish, and whose young husband had died, and who had died of sorrow herself, and whose unfortunate baby (Old Cheeseman) had been brought up at the cost of a grandfather who would never consent to see it, baby, boy, or man: which grandfather was now dead, and serve him right—that's my putting in—and which grandfather's large property, there being no will, was now, and all of a sudden and for ever, Old

Cheeseman's! Our so long respected friend and fellow-pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge, the Reverend wound up a lot of bothering quotations by saying, would "come among us once more" that day fortnight, when he desired to take leave of us himself in a more particular manner. With these words, he stared severely round at our fellows, and went solemnly out.

There was precious consternation among the members of the Society, now. Lots of them wanted to resign, and lots more began to try to make out that they had never belonged to it. However, the President stuck up, and said that they must stand or fall together, and that if a breach was made it should be over his body—which was meant to encourage the Society: but it didn't. The President further said, he would consider the position in which they stood, and would give them his best opinion and advice in a few days. This was eagerly looked for, as he knew a good deal of the world on account of his father's being in the West Indies.

After days and days of hard thinking, and drawing armies all over his slate, the President called our fellows together, and made the matter clear. He said it was plain that when Old Cheeseman came on the appointed day, his first revenge would be to impeach the Society, and have it flogged all round. After witnessing with joy the torture of his enemies, and gloating over the cries which agony would extort from them, the probability was that he would invite the Reverend, on pretence of conversation, into a private room—say the parlour into which Parents were shown, where the two great globes were which were never used—and would there reproach him with the various frauds and oppressions he had endured at his hands. At the close of his observations he would make a signal to a Prizefighter concealed in the passage, who would then appear and pitch into the Reverend till he was left insensible. Old Cheeseman would then make Jane a present of from five to ten pounds, and would leave the establishment in fiendish triumph.

The President explained that against the parlour part, or the Jane part, of these arrangements he had nothing to say; but, on the part of the Society, he counselled deadly resistance. With this view he recommended that all available desks should be filled with stones, and that the first word of the complaint should be the signal to every fellow to let fly at Old Cheeseman. The bold advice put the Society in better spirits, and was unanimously taken. A post about Old Cheeseman's size was put up in the playground, and all our fellows practised at it till it was dented all over.

When the day came, and Places were called, every fellow sat down in a tremble. There had been much discussing and dis-

putting us to how Old Cheeseman would come; but it was the general opinion that he would appear in a sort of a triumphal car drawn by four horses, with two livery servants in front, and the Prizefighter in disguise up behind. So, all our fellows sat listening for the sound of wheels. But no wheels were heard, for Old Cheeseman walked after all, and came into the school without any preparation. Pretty much as he used to be, only dressed in black.

"Gentlemen," said the Reverend, presenting him, "our so long respected friend and fellow pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge, is desirous to offer a word or two. Attention, gentlemen, one and all!"

Every fellow stole his hand into his desk and looked at the President. The President was all ready, and taking aim at Old Cheeseman with his eyes.

What did Old Cheeseman then, but walk up to his old desk, look round him with a queer smile as if there was a tear in his eye, and begin in a quavering mild voice, "My dear companions and old friends!"

Every fellow's hand came out of his desk, and the President suddenly began to cry.

"My dear companions and old friends," said Old Cheeseman, "you have heard of my good fortune. I have passed so many years under this roof—my entire life so far, I may say—that I hope you have been glad to hear of it for my sake. I could never enjoy it without exchanging congratulations with you. If we have ever misunderstood one another at all, pray my dear boys let us forgive and forget. I have a great tenderness for you, and I am sure you return it. I want in the fulness of a grateful heart to shake hands with you every one. I have come back to do it, if you please, my dear boys."

Since the President had begun to cry, several other fellows had broken out here and there: but now, when Old Cheeseman began with him as first boy, laid his left hand affectionately on his shoulder and gave him his right; and when the President said "Indeed I don't deserve it, Sir; upon my honour I don't;" there was sobbing and crying all over the school. Every other fellow said he didn't deserve it, much in the same way; but Old Cheeseman, not minding that a bit, went cheerfully round to every boy, and wound up with every master—finishing off the Reverend last.

Then a snivelling little chap in a corner, who was always under some punishment or other, set up a shrill cry of "Success to Old Cheeseman! Hooray!" The Reverend glared upon him, and said "Mr. Cheeseman, Sir." But, Old Cheeseman protesting that he liked his old name a great deal better than his new one, all our fellows took up the cry; and, for I don't know how many minutes, there was such a thundering of feet and hands, and such a roaring of Old Cheeseman, as never was heard.

After that, there was a spread in the

dining-room of the most magnificent kind. Fowls, tongues, preserves, fruits, confectionaries, jellies, neguses, barley-sugar temples, trifles, crackers—eat all you can and pocket what you like—all at Old Cheeseman's expense. After that, speeches, whole holiday, double and treble sets of all manners of things for all manners of games, donkeys, pony-chaises and drive yourself, dinner for all the masters at the Seven Bells (twenty pound a-head our fellows estimated it at), an annual holiday and feast fixed for that day every year, and another on Old Cheeseman's birthday—Reverend bound down before the fellows to allow it, so that he could never back out—all at Old Cheeseman's expense.

And didn't our fellows go down in a body and cheer outside the Seven Bells? O, no!

But there's something else besides. Don't look at the next story-teller, for there's more yet. Next day, it was resolved that the Society should make it up with Jane, and then be dissolved. What do you think of Jane being gone, though! "What? Gone for ever?" said our fellows, with long faces. "Yes, to be sure," was all the answer they could get. None of the people about the house would say anything more. At length, the first boy took upon himself to ask the Reverend whether our old friend Jane was really gone? The Reverend (he has got a daughter at home—turn-up nose, and red) replied severely, "Yes Sir, Miss Pitt is gone." The idea of calling Jane, Miss Pitt! Some said she had been sent away in disgrace for taking money from Old Cheeseman; others said she had gone into Old Cheeseman's service at a rise of ten pounds a year. All that our fellows knew, was, she was gone.

It was two or three months afterwards, when, one afternoon, an open carriage stopped at the cricket-field, just outside bounds, with a lady and gentleman in it, who looked at the game a long time and stood up to see it played. Nobody thought much about them, until the same little snivelling chap came in, against all rules, from the post where he was Scout, and said, "It's Jane!" Both Elevens forgot the game directly, and ran crowding round the carriage. *It was Jane!* In such a bonnet! And if you'll believe me, Jane was married to Old Cheeseman.

It soon became quite a regular thing when our fellows were hard at it in the playground, to see a carriage at the low part of the wall where it joins the high part, and a lady and gentleman standing up in it, looking over. The gentleman was always Old Cheeseman, and the lady was always Jane.

The first time I ever saw them, I saw them in that way. There had been a good many changes among our fellows then, and it had turned out that Bob Tarter's father wasn't worth Millions! He wasn't worth anything. Bob had gone for a soldier, and Old Cheeseman had purchased his discharge. But that's not the carriage. The carriage stopped, and

all our fellows stopped as soon as it was seen.

"So you have never sent me to Coventry after all!" said the lady, laughing, as our fellows swarmed up the wall to shake hands with her. "Are you never going to do it?"

"Never! never! never!" on all sides.

I didn't understand what she meant then, but of course I do now. I was very much pleased with her face though, and with her good way, and I couldn't help looking at her—and at him too—with all our fellows clust'ring so joyfully about them.

They soon took notice of me as a new boy, so I thought I might as well swarm up the wall myself, and shake hands with them as the rest did. I was quite as glad to see them as the rest were, and was quite as familiar with them in a moment.

"Only a fortnight now," said Old Cheeseman, "to the holidays. Who stops? Anybody?"

A good many fingers pointed at me, and a good many voices cried, "He does!" For it was the year when you were all away; and rather low I was about it, I can tell you.

"Oh!" said Old Cheeseman. "But it's solitary here in the holiday time. He had better come to us."

So I went to their delightful house, and was as happy as I could possibly be. They understand how to conduct themselves towards boys, *they* do. When they take a boy to the play, for instance, they *do* take him. They don't go in after it's begun, or come out before it's over. They know how to bring a boy up, too. Look at their own! Though he is very little as yet, what a capital boy he is! Why, my next favourite to Mrs. Cheeseman and Old Cheeseman, is young Cheeseman.

So, now I have told you all I know about Old Cheeseman. And it's not much after all, I am afraid. Is it?

THE OLD LADY'S STORY.

I HAVE never told you my secret, my dear nieces. However, this Christmas, which may well be the last to an old woman, I will give the whole story; for though it is a strange story, and a sad one, it is true; and what sin there was in it I trust I may have expiated by my tears and my repentance. Perhaps the last expiation of all is this painful confession.

We were very young at the time, Lucy and I, and the neighbours said we were pretty. So we were, I believe, though entirely different; for Lucy was quiet, and fair, and I was full of life and spirits; wild beyond any power of control, and reckless. I was the elder by two years; but more fit to be in leading-strings myself than to guide or govern my sister. But she was so good, so quiet, and so wise, that she needed no one's guidance; for if advice was to be given, it was she who gave it, not I; and

I never knew her judgment or perception fail. She was the darling of the house. My mother had died soon after Lucy was born. A picture in the dining-room of her in spite of all the difference of dress, was exactly like Lucy; and, as Lucy was now seventeen and my mother had been only eighteen when it was taken, there was no discrepancy of years.

One Allhallow's eve a party of us—all young girls, not one of us twenty years of age—were trying our fortunes round the drawing-room fire; throwing nuts into the brightest blaze, to hear if mythic "He"'s loved any of us, and in what proportion; or pouring hot lead into water, to find cradles and rings, or purses and coffins; or breaking the whites of eggs into tumblers half full of water, and then drawing up the white into pictures of the future—the prettiest experiment of all. I remember Lucy could only make a recumbent figure of hers, like a marble monument in miniature; and I, a maze of masks and skulls and things that looked like dancing apes or imps, and vapoury lines that did not require much imagination to fashion into ghosts or spirits; for they were clearly human in the outline, but thin and vapoury. And we all laughed a great deal, and teased one another, and were as full of fun and mischief, and innocence and thoughtlessness, as a nest of young birds.

There was a certain room at the other end of our rambling old manor-house, which was said to be haunted, and which my father had therefore discontinued as a dwelling-room, so that we children might not be frightened by foolish servants; and he had made it into a lumber-place—a kind of ground-floor granary—where no one had any business. Well, it was proposed that one of us should go into this room alone, lock the door, stand before a glass, pare and eat an apple very deliberately, looking fixedly in the glass all the time; and then, if the mind never once wandered, the future husband would be clearly shown in the glass. As I was always the foolhardy girl of every party, and was, moreover, very desirous of seeing that apocryphal individual, my future husband (whose non-appearance I used to wonder at and bewail in secret), I was glad enough to make the trial, notwithstanding the entreaties of some of the more timid. Lucy, above all, clung to me, and besought me earnestly not to go—at last, almost with tears. But my pride of courage, and my curiosity, and a certain nameless feeling of attraction, were too strong for me. I laughed Lucy and her abettors into silence; uttered half a dozen bravados; and, taking up a bed-room candle, passed through the long silent passages, to the cold, dark, deserted room—my heart beating with excitement, my foolish head dizzy with hope and faith. The church-clock chimed a quarter past twelve as I opened the door.

It was an awful night. The windows

shook, as if every instant they would burst in with some strong man's hand on the bars, and his shoulder against the frames; and the trees howled and shrieked, as if each branch were sentient and in pain. The ivy beat against the window, sometimes with fury, and sometimes with the leaves slowly scraping against the glass, and drawing out long shrill sounds, like spirits crying to each other. In the room itself it was worse. Rats had made it their refuge for many years, and they rushed behind the wainscot and down inside the walls, bringing with them showers of lime and dust, which rattled like chains, or sounded like men's feet hurrying to and fro; and every now and then a cry broke through the room, one could not tell from where or from what, but a cry, distinct and human; heavy blows seemed to be struck on the floor, which cracked like parting ice beneath my feet, and loud knockings shook the walls. Yet in this tumult, I was not afraid. I reasoned on each new sound very calmly—and said, "Those are rats," or "those are leaves, and 'birds in the chimney,' or 'owls in the ivy,'" as each new howl or scream struck my ear. And I was not in the least frightened or disturbed; it all seemed natural and familiar. I placed the candle on a table in the midst of the room, where an old broken mirror stood; and, looking steadily into the glass (having first wiped off the dust), I began to eat Eve's forbidden fruit, wishing intently, as I had been bidden, for the apparition of my future husband.

In about ten minutes I heard a dull, vague, unearthly sound; felt, not heard. It was as if countless wings rushed by, and small low voices whispering too; as if a crowd, a multitude of life was about me; as if shadowy faces crushed up against me, and eyes and hands, and sneering lips, all mocked me. I was suffocated. The air was so heavy—so filled with life, that I could not breathe. I was pressed on from all sides, and could not turn nor move without parting thickening vapours. I heard my own name—I can swear to that today! I heard it repeated through the room; and then bursts of laughter followed, and the wings rustled and fluttered, and the whispering voices mocked and chattered, and the heavy air, so filled with life, hung heavier and thicker, and the Things pressed up to me closer, and checked the breath on my lips with the clammy breath from theirs.

I was not alarmed. I was not excited; but I was fascinated and spell-bound; yet with every sense seeming to possess ten times its natural power. I still went on looking in the glass—still earnestly desiring an apparition—when suddenly I saw a man's face peering over my shoulder in the glass. Girls, I could draw that face to this hour! The low forehead, with the short curling hair, black as jet, growing down in a sharp point; the dark eyes, beneath thick eyebrows, burning with a peculiar light; the

nose and the dilating nostrils; the thin lips, curled into a smile—I see them all plainly before me now. And—O, the smile that it was!—the mockery and sneer, the derision, the sarcasm, the contempt, the victory that were in it!—even then it struck into me a sense of submission. The eyes looked full into mine: those eyes and mine fastened on each other; and, as I ended my task, the church clock chimed the half-hour; and, suddenly released, as if from a spell, I turned round, expecting to see a living man standing beside me. But I met only the chill air coming in from the loose window, and the solitude of the dark night. The Life had gone; the wings had rushed away; the voices had died out, and I was alone; with the rats behind the wainscot, the owls hooting in the ivy, and the wind howling through the trees.

Convinced that either some trick had been played me, or that some one was concealed in the room, I searched every corner of it. I lifted lids of boxes filled with the dust of ages and with rotting paper lying like bleaching skin. I took down the chimney-board, and soot and ashes flew up in clouds. I opened dim old closets, where all manner of foul insects had made their homes, and where daylight had not entered for generations; but I found nothing. Satisfied that nothing human was in the room, and that no one could have been there to-night—nor for many months, if not years—and still nerved to a state of desperate courage, I went back to the drawing-room. But, as I left that room I felt that something flowed out with me; and, all through the long passages, I retained the sensation that this something was behind me. My steps were heavy; the consciousness of pursuit having paralysed, not quickened me; for I knew that when I left that haunted room I had not left it alone. As I opened the drawing-room door—the blazing fire and the strong lamp-light bursting out upon me with a peculiar expression of cheerfulness and welcome—I heard a laugh close at my elbow, and felt a hot blast across my neck. I started back, but the laugh died away, and all I saw were two points of light, fiery and flaming, that somehow fashioned themselves into eyes beneath their heavy brows, and looked at me meaningly through the darkness.

They all wanted to know what I had seen; but I refused to say a word; not liking to tell a falsehood then, and not liking to expose myself to ridicule. For I felt that what I had seen was true, and that no sophistry and no argument, no reasoning and no ridicule, could shake my belief in it. My sweet Lucy came up to me—seeing me look so pale and wild—threw her arms round my neck, and leaned forward to kiss me. As she bent her head, I felt the same warm blast rush over my lips, and my sister, cried, "Why, Lizzie your lips burn like fire!"

And so they did, and for long after. The Presence was with me still, never leaving me day nor night: by my pillow, its whispering voice often waking me from wild dreams; by my side, in the broad sunlight; by my side, in the still moonlight; never absent, busy at my brain, busy at my heart—a form ever banded to me. It flitted like a cold cloud between my sweet sister's eyes and mine, and dimmed them so that I could scarcely see their beauty. It drowned my father's voice; and his words fell confused and indistinct.

Not long after, a stranger came into our neighbourhood. He bought Green Howe, a deserted old property by the river-side, where no one had lived for many many years; not since the young bride, Mrs. Braithwaite, had been found in the river one morning, entangled among the dank weeds and dripping alders, strangled and drowned, and her husband dead—none knew how—lying by the chapel door. The place had had a bad name ever since, and no one would live there. However, it was said that a stranger, who had been long in the East, a Mr. Felix, had now bought it, and that he was coming to reside there. And, true enough, one day the whole of our little town of Thornhill was in a state of excitement; for a travelling-carriage and four, followed by another full of servants—Hindoos, or Lascars, or Negroes; dark-coloured, strange-looking people—passed through, and Mr. Felix took possession of Green Howe.

My father called on him after a time; and I, as the mistress of the house, went with him. Green Howe had been changed, as if by magic, and we both said so together, as we entered the iron gates that led up the broad walk. The ruined garden was one mass of plants, fresh and green, many of them quite new to me; and the shrubbery, which had been a wilderness, was restored to order. The house looked larger than before, now that it was so beautifully decorated; and the broken trellis-work, which used to hang dangling among the ivy, was matted with creeping roses, and jasmine, which left on me the impression of having been in flower, which was impossible. It was a fairy palace; and we could scarcely believe that this was the deserted, ill-omened Green Howe. The foreign servants, too, in Eastern dresses, covered with rings, and necklaces, and earrings; the foreign smells of sandal-wood, and camphor, and musk; the curtains that hung everywhere in places of doors, some of velvet, and some of cloth of gold; the air of luxury, such as I, a simple country girl, had never seen before, made such a powerful impression on me, that I felt as if carried away to some unknown region. As we entered, Mr. Felix came to meet us; and, drawing aside a heavy curtain that seemed all of gold and fire—for the flame-coloured flowers danced and quivered on the gold—he led us into an inner room, where the darkened

light; the atmosphere heavy with perfumes; the statues; the birds like living jewels; the magnificence of stuffs, and the luxuriousness of arrangement, overpowered me. I felt as if I had sunk into a lethargy, in which I heard only the rich voice, and saw only the fine form of our stranger host.

He was certainly very handsome; tall, dark, yet pale as marble: his very lips were pale; with eyes that were extremely bright; but which had an expression behind them that subdued me. His manners were graceful. He was very cordial to us, and made us stay a long time; taking us through his grounds to see his improvements, and pointing out here and there further alterations to be made; all with such a disregard for local difficulties, and for cost, that, had he been one of the princes of the genii he could not have talked more royally. He was more than merely attentive to me; speaking to me often and in a lower voice, bending down near to me, and looking at me with eyes that thrilled through every nerve and fibre. I saw that my father was uneasy; and, when we left, I asked him how he liked our new neighbour. He said, "Not much, Lizzie," with a grave and almost displeased look, as if he had probed the weakness I was scarcely conscious of myself. I thought at the time that he was harsh.

However, as there was nothing positively to object to in Mr. Felix, my father's impulse of distrust could not well be indulged without rudeness; and my dear father was too thoroughly a gentleman ever to be rude even to his enemy. We therefore saw a great deal of the stranger; who established himself in our house on the most familiar footing, and forced on my father and Lucy an intimacy they both disliked but could not avoid. For it was forced with such consummate skill and tact, that there was nothing which the most rigid could object to.

I gradually became an altered being under his influence. In one thing only a happier—in the loss of the Voice and the Form which had haunted me. Since I had known Felix this terror had gone. The reality had absorbed the shadow. But in nothing else was this strange man's influence over me, beneficial. I remember that I used to hate myself for my excessive irritability of temper when I was away from him. Everything at home displeased me. Everything seemed so small and mean and old and poor after the lordly glory of that house; and the very caresses of my family and olden school-day friends were irksome and hateful to me. All except my Lucy lost its charm; and to her I was faithful as, ever; to her I never changed. But her influence seemed to war with his, wonderfully. When with him I felt borne away in a torrent. His words fell upon me mysterious and thrilling, and he gave me fleeting glimpses into worlds

which had never opened themselves to me before; glimpses seen and gone like the Arabian gardens.

When I came back to my sweet sister, her pure eyes and the holy light that lay in them, her gentle voice speaking of the sacred things of heaven and the earnest things of life, seemed to me like a former existence: a state I had lived in years ago. But this divided influence nearly killed me; it seemed to part my very soul and wrench my being in twain; and this, more than all the rest, made me sad beyond anything people believed possible in one so gay and reckless as I had been.

My father's dislike to Felix increased daily; and Lucy, who had never been known to use a harsh word in her life, from the first refused to believe a thought of good in him, or to allow him one single claim to praise. She used to cling to me in a wild, beseeching way, and entreat me with prayers, such as a mother might have poured out before an erring child, to stop in time, and to return to those who loved me. "For your soul is lost from among us, Lizzie," she used to say; "and nothing but a frame remains of the full life of love you once gave us!" But one word, one look, from Felix was enough to make me forget every ear had every prayer of her who, until now, had been my idol and my law.

At last my dear father commanded me not to see Felix again. I felt as if I should have died. In vain I wept and prayed. In vain I gave full license to my thoughts, and suffered words to pour from my lips which ought never to have crept into my heart. In vain; my father was inexorable.

I was in the drawing-room. Suddenly, noiselessly, Felix was beside me. He had not entered by the door which was directly in front of me; and the window was closed. I never could understand this sudden appearance; for I am certain that he had not been concealed.

"Your father has spoken of thee, Lizzie?" he said with a singular smile. I was silent.

"And has forbidden you to see me again?" he continued.

"Yes," I answered, impelled to speak by something stronger than my will.

"And you intend to obey him?"

"No," I said again, in the same manner, as if I had been talking in a dream.

He smiled again. Who was he so like when he smiled? I could not remember, and yet I knew that he was like some one I had seen—a face that hovered outside my memory, on the horizon, and never floated near enough to be distinctly realised.

"You are right, Lizzie," he then said; "there are ties which are stronger than a father's commands—ties which no man has the right, and no man has the power to break. Meet me to-morrow at noon in the Low Lane; we will speak further."

He did not say, this is my supplicating,

nor in any loving manner: it was simply a command, unaccompanied by one tender word or look. He had never said he loved me—never; it seemed to be too well understood between us to need assurances.

I answered, "Yes," burying my face in my hands, in shame at this my first act of disobedience to my father; and, when I raised my head, he was gone. Gone as he had entered, without a footfall sounding ever so lightly.

I met him the next day; and it was not the only time that I did so. Day after day I stole at his command from the house, to walk with him in the Low Lane—the lane which the country people said was haunted, and which was consequently always deserted. And there we used to walk or sit under the blighted elm tree for hours;—he talking, but I not understanding all he said: for there was a tone of grandeur and of mystery in his words that overpowered without enlightening me, and that left my spirit dazzled rather than convinced. I had to give reasons at home for my long absences, and he bade me say that I had been with old Dame Todd, the blind widow of Thornhill Rise, and that I had been reading the Bible to her. And I obeyed; although, while I said it, I felt Lucy's eyes fixed plaintively on mine, and heard her murmur a prayer that I might be forgiven.

Lucy grew ill. As the flowers and the summer sun came on, her spirit faded more rapidly away. I have known since, that it was grief more than malady which was killing her. The look of nameless suffering, which used to be in her face, has haunted me through life with undying sorrow. It was suffering that I, who ought to have rather died for her, had caused. But not even her illness stayed me. In the intervals I nursed her tenderly and lovingly as before; but for hours and hours I left her—all through the long days of summer—to walk in the Low Lane, and to sit in my world of poetry and fire. When I came back my sister was often weeping, and I knew that it was for me—I, who once would have given my life to save her from one hour of sorrow. Then I would fling myself on my knees beside her, in an agony of shame and repentance, and promise better things of the morrow, and vow strong efforts against the power and the spell that were on me. But the morrow subjected me to the same unhallowed fascination, the same faithlessness.

At last Felix told me that I must come with him; that I must leave my home, and take part in his life; that I belonged to him and to him only, and that I could not break the tablet of a fate ordained; that I was his destiny, and he mine, and that I must fulfil the law which the stars had written in the sky. I fought against this. I spoke of my father's anger, and of my sister's illness. I prayed to him for pity, not to force this on

me, and knelt in the shadows of the autumn sunset to ask from him forbearance.

I did not yield this day, nor the next, nor for many days. At last he conquered. When I said "Yes" he kissed the scarf I wore round my neck. Until then he had never touched even my hand with his lips. I consented to leave my sister, who I well knew was dying; I consented to leave my father, whose whole life had been one act of love and care for his children; and to bring a stain on our name, unstained until then. I consented to leave those who loved me—all I loved—for a stranger.

All was prepared; the hurrying clouds, lead-coloured, and the howling wind, the fit companions in nature with the evil and the despair of my soul. Lucy was worse to-day; but though I felt going to my death, in leaving her, I could not resist. Had his voice called me to the scaffold, I must have gone. It was the last day of October, and at midnight when I was to leave the house. I had kissed my sleeping sister, who was dreaming in her sleep, and cried, and grasped my hand, and called aloud, "Lizzie, Lizzie! Come back!" But the spell was on me, and I left her; and still her dreaming voice called out, choking with sobs, "Not there! not there, Lizzie! Come back to me!"

I was to leave the house by the large, old, haunted room that I have spoken of before; Felix waiting for me outside. And, a little after twelve o'clock, I opened the door to pass through. This time the chill, and the damp, and the darkness unnerved me. The broken mirror was in the middle of the room, as before, and, in passing it, I mechanically raised my eyes. Then I remembered that it was Allhallow's eve, the anniversary of the apparition of last year. As I looked, the room, which had been so dead still, became filled with the sound I had heard before. The rushing of large wings, and the crowd of whispering voices flowed like a river round me; and again, glaring into my eyes, was the same face in the glass that I had seen before, the sneering smile even more triumphant, the blighting stare of the fiery eyes, the low brow and the coal-black hair, and the look of mockery. All were there; and all I had seen before and since; for it was Felix who was gazing at me from the glass. When I turned to speak to him, the room was empty. Not a living creature was there; only a low laugh, and the far-off voices whispering, and the wings. And then a hand tapped on the window, and the voice of Felix cried from outside, "Come, Lizzie, come!"

I staggered, rather than walked, to the window; and, as I was close to it—my hand raised to open it—there stood between me and it a pale figure clothed in white; her face more pale than the linen round it. Her hair hung down on her breast, and her blue eyes looked earnestly and mournfully into

mine. She was silent, and yet it seemed as if a volume of love and of entreaty flowed from her lips; as if I heard words of deathless affection. It was Lucy; standing there in this bitter midnight cold—giving her life to save me. Felix called to me again, impatiently; and, as he called, the figure turned, and beckoned me; beckoning me gently, lovingly, beseechingly; and then slowly faded away. The chime of the half-hour sounded; and, I fled from the room to my sister. I found her lying dead on the floor; her hair hanging over her breast, and one hand stretched out as if in supplication.

The next day Felix disappeared; he and his whole retinue; and Green Howe fell into ruins again. No one knew where he went, as no one knew from whence he came. And to this day I sometimes doubt whether or not he was a clever adventurer, who had heard of my father's wealth; and who, seeing my weak and imaginative character, had acted on it for his own purposes. All that I do know is that my sister's spirit saved me from ruin; and that she died to save me. She had seen and known all, and gave herself for my salvation down to the last and supreme effort she made to rescue me. She died at that hour of half-past twelve; and at half-past twelve, as I live before you all, she appeared to me and recalled me.

And this is the reason why I never married, and why I pass Allhallow's eve in prayer by my sister's grave. I have told you to-night this story of mine, because I feel that I shall not live over another last night of October, but that before the next white Christmas roses come out like winter stars on the earth I shall be at peace in the grave. Not in the grave; let me rather hope with my blessed sister in Heaven!

OVER THE WAY'S STORY.

ONCE upon a time, before I retired from mercantile pursuits and came to live over the way, I lived, for many years, in Ursine Lane.

Ursine Lane is a very rich, narrow, dark, dirty, straggling, lane in the great city of London (said by some to be itself as rich, as dark, and as dirty). Ursine Lane leads from Cheapside into Thames Street, facing Sir John Pigg's wharf; but whether Ursine Lane be above or below Bow Church, I shall not tell you. Neither, whether its name be derived from a bear-garden, (which was in great vogue in its environs in Queen Bess's time), or from an Ursuline Nunnery which flourished in its vicinity, before big, bad King Harry sent nuns to spin, or to do anything else they could. Ursine Lane is before the great fire of London, and Ursine Lane it is now.

The houses in Ursine Lane are very old, very inconvenient, and very dilapidated; and I don't think another great fire (all the houses

being well insured, depend upon it) would do the neighbourhood any harm, in clearing the rubbishing old lane away. Number four tumbled in, and across the road on to number sixteen, a few years ago; and since then, Ursine Lane has been provided with a species of roofing in the shape of great wooden beams to shore up its opposite sides. The district surveyor shakes his head very much at Ursine Lane, and resides as far from it as he can. The cats of the neighbourhood find great delectation in the shoring beams, using them, in the night season, as rialtos and bridges, not of sighs, but of miauws; but foot passengers look wistfully and somewhat fearfully upwards at these wooden defences. Yet Ursine Lane remains. To be sure, if you were to pull it down, you would have to remove the old church of St. Nicholas Bearcroft, where the bells ring every Friday night, in conformity with a bequest of Master Miniver Squirrel, furrier, obit sixteen hundred and eighty-four, piously to commemorate his escape from the paws of a grisly bear while travelling in the wilds of Muscovy. You would have to demolish the brave gilt lion, and the brave gilt unicorn at the extremity of the churchwardens' pew, who (saving their gender) with the clerk, the sexton, and two or three deaf old shopkeepers and their wives, are pretty nearly all the dearly beloved brethren whom the Reverend Tremaine Popple, M.A., can gather together as a congregation. Worse than all, if Ursine Lane were to come down, the pump must come down—the old established, constitutional, vested, endowed pump; built, so tradition runs, over a fountain blessed by the great St. Ursula herself. So Ursine Lane remains.

At a certain period of the world's history, it may have been yesterday, it may have been yesterday twenty years, there dwelt in this dismal avenue, a Beast. Everybody called him a Beast. He was a Manchester warehouseman. Now it is not at all necessary for a Manchester warehouseman—or, indeed, for any warehouseman—to be a beast or a brute, or anything disagreeable. Quite the contrary. For instance, next door to the Beast's were the counting-houses and warehouses of Tapperly and Grigg, also Manchester warehousemen, as merry, light-hearted, good-humoured young fellows as you would wish to see. Tapperly was somewhat of a sporting character, rode away every afternoon on a high-stepping brown mare, and lounged regularly about the entrance to "Tats" whether he booked any bets or not. As for Grigg, he was the Coryphæus of all the middle class *soirées*, dancing academies and subscription balls in London, and it was a moving sight, to see him in his famous Crusader costume at a Drury Lane Bal Masqué. Nor was old Sir William Watch (of the firm of Watch, Watch, and Rover, Manchester warehousemen) at the corner, who had gained so many thousand pounds for

smuggling once upon a time, at all beastlike or brutish. He was a white-headed, charitable jolly old gentleman, fond of old port and old songs and old clerks and porters, and his cheque-book was as open as his heart. Lactael, Flewitt, and Company, again, on the other side of the Beast's domicile, the great dealers in gauzes and ribbons, were mild, placable, pious men, the beloved of Clapham. But the Beast was a Beast and no mistake. Everybody said he was; and what everybody says, must be true. His name was Braddlescrogs.

Barnard Braddlescrogs. He was the head, the trunk and the tail of the firm. No Co., no son, no nephew, no brothers: B. BRADDLESCROGS glared at you from either door-jamb. His warehouses were extensive, gloomy, dark, and crowded. So were his counting-houses, which were mostly underground, and candle lit. He loved to keep his subordinates in these dark dens, where he could rush in upon them suddenly, and growl at them. You came wandering through these subterraneans upon wan men, pent up among parasols and cartons of gay ribbons; upon pale lads in spectacles registering silks and merinos by the light of flickering, strong-smelling tallow candles in rusty sconces. There was no counting-house community; no deaf-fellowship: the clerks were isolated—dammed up in steep little pulpits, relegated behind walls of cotton goods, consigned to the *impasse* of bales of tariatan and barège. The Beast was everywhere. He prowled about continually. He lurked in holes and corners. He reprimanded clerks on staircases, and discharged porters in dark entries. His deep, harsh, grating voice could ever be heard growling during the hours of business, somewhere, like a sullen earthquake. His stern Wellington boots continually creaked. His numerous keys rattled gaoler-fashion. His very watch, when wound up, made a savage gnashing noise, as though the works were in torment. He was a Beast.

Tall, square, sinewy, and muscular in person; large and angular in features; with a puissant, rebellious head of grey hair that would have defied all the brushing, combing, and greasing of the Burlington Arcade; with black bushy eyebrows nearly meeting on his forehead; with a horseshoe frown between his eyes; with stubbly whiskers, like horse-hair spikes, rather indented in his cheekbones than growing on his cheeks; with a large, stiff, shirt collar and frill defending his face like *chevaux-de-frise*; with large, coarse, bony hands plunged in his trousers pockets; with a great seal and ribbons and the savage ticking watch I have mentioned—such was Barnard Braddlescrogs. From the ears and nostrils of such men you see small hairs growing, indomitable by tweezers; signs of inflexibility of purpose, and stern virility. Their joints crack as they walk. His did. Very rich, as his father, old Simon Braddles-

scroogs, had been before him, B. Braddlescroogs was not an avaricious man. He had never been known to lend or advance a penny to the necessitous; but he paid his clerks and servants liberal salaries. This was a little unaccountable in the Beast, but it was said that they did not hate him the less. He gave largely to stern charities, such as dragged sinners to repentance, or administered eleemosynary food, education and blows (in a progressively liberal proportion) to orphan children. He was a visiting justice to strict gaols, and was supposed not to have quite made up his mind as to what system of prison discipline was best—unremitting corporal punishment, or continuous solitary confinement. He apprenticed boys to hard trades, or assisted them to emigrate to inclement climates. He was a member of a rigid persuasion, and one high in authority, and had half built a chapel at his own expense; but everybody said that few people thanked him, or were grateful to him for his generosity. He was such a Beast. He bit the orphan's nose off, and bullied the widow. He gave alms as one who pelts a dog with marrow-bones, hurting him while he feeds him. Those in his employment who embezzled or robbed him, were it of but a penny piece, he mercilessly prosecuted to conviction. Everybody had observed it. He sued all debtors, opposed all insolvents, and strove to bring all bankrupts within the meaning of the penal clauses. Everybody knew it. The merchants and brokers, his compeers, fell away from him on 'Change; his correspondents opened his hard, fierce letters with palpitating hearts; his clerks cowered before him; his maid servants, passed him (when they had courage to pass him at all) with fear and trembling. The waiters at the "Cock" in Threadneedle Street, where he took a fiery bowl of Mulligatawny soup for lunch, daily, didn't like him. At his club at the West End he had a bow-window and a pile of newspapers all to himself—dined by himself—drank by himself—growled to himself.

There had been a Mrs. Braddlescroogs; a delicate, blue-eyed little woman out of Devonshire, who had been Beauty to the Beast. She died early. Her husband was not reported to have beaten her, or starved her, or verbally ill-treated her, but simply to have frightened her to death. Everybody said so. She could never take those mild blue eyes of hers off her terrible husband, and died—looking at him timorously. One son had been born to B. B. at her demise. He grew up a pale, fair-haired, frightened lad, with his mother's eyes. The Beast had treated him (everybody was indignant at it) from his earliest years with unvarying and consistent severity; and at fourteen he was removed from the school of the rigid persuasion, where he had received his dreary commercial education, to his father's rigider, drearier establishment in Ursine Lane. He had a depart-

ment to himself there, and a tallow candle to himself.

The clerks, some twelve in number, all dined and slept in the house. They had a dismal dormitory over some stables in Grizzly Buildings, at the back of Ursine Lane; and dined in a dingy, uncarpeted room at the top of the building—on one unvarying bill of fare of beef, mutton, and potatoes—plenty of it, though, for the Beast never stinted them—which was remarkable in such a Beast. The domestic arrangements were superintended by a housekeeper—a tall, melancholy, middle-aged lady, supposed to have been once in affluent circumstances. She had been very good-looking, too, once, but had something the matter with her spine, and not unfrequently fell downstairs, or upstairs, in fits of syncope. When the Beast had no one else to abuse and mal-treat, he would go upstairs and abuse Mrs. Plimmets, and threaten her with dismissal and inevitable starvation. Business hours concluded at eight nightly, and from that hour to ten P.M. the clerks were permitted to walk where they listed—but exclusion and expulsion were the never failing result of a moment's unpunctuality in returning home. The porters slept out of the house, and the clerks looked at them almost as superior beings—as men of strange experiences and knowledge of life—men who had been present at orgies prolonged beyond midnight—men who had remained in the galleries of theatres till the performances were concluded.

Of the dozen clerks who kept the books of Barnard Braddlescroogs (save that grim auriferous banker's pass-book of his) and registered his wares, I have to deal with but two. My business lies only with blue-eyed, pale-faced William Braddlescroogs, and with John Simcox the corresponding clerk.

Simcox among his fellow clerks, Mr. Simcox among the porters, Jack Simcox among his intimates at the "Admiral Benbow" near Camberwell Gate, "you Simcox," with his growing chief. A grey-haired, smiling, red-faced simpleton was Simcox; kind of heart, simple of mind, affectionate of disposition, confiding of nature, infirm of purpose, convivial of habits. He was fifty years in age, and fifteen in wisdom. He had been at the top of the ladder once—a rich man at least by paternal inheritance, with a carriage and horses and lands; but when he tumbled (which he did at five-and-twenty, very quickly and right to the bottom), he never managed to rise again. The dupe of every shallow knave; the victim in every egregious scheme; an excellent arithmetician, yet quite unable to put two and two together in a business sense; he had never even had strength of character to be his own enemy; he had always found such a multiplicity of friends ready to do the inimical for him. If you let him alone he would do well enough. He would not lose his money till you cheated him out of it; he would not get drunk himself,

but would allow you to make him so, with the most charming willingness and equanimity. There are many Simcoxes in the world, and more rogues always ready to prey upon them; yet though I should like to hang the rogues, I should not like to see the breed of Simcox quite extinct.

John Simcox had a salary of one hundred and twenty pounds a year. If I were writing fiction instead of sober (though veiled) truth, I should picture him to you as a victim with some two score of sovereigns per annum. No; he had a hundred and twenty of those yellow tokens annually—for the Beast never stinted in this respect either: which was again remarkable in such a Beast. One hundred and twenty golden sovereigns annually, had John Simcox; and they were of about as much use to him as one hundred and twenty penny pieces. When a man has a quarter's salary amounting to twenty-seven pounds, receivable next Thursday, and out of that has a score of three pounds due at the "Admiral Benbow," and has promised to (and will) lend ten pounds to a friend, and has borrowed five more of another friend himself, which he means to pay; and has besides his little rent to meet, and his little butcher and his little grocer and his little tailor, it is not very difficult to imagine how the man may be considerably embarrassed in satisfying all these demands out of the capital. But, when the administrator of the capital happens to be (as Simcox was) a man without the slightest command of himself or his money—you will have no difficulty in forming a conviction that the end of Simcox's quarter-days were worse than their commencement.

Nor will you be surprised that "executions" in Simcox's little house in Carolinaterace, Albany-road, Camberwell, were of frequent occurrence; that writs against him were always "out," and the brokers always "in." That he was as well known in the county court as the judge. That orders for payment were always coming due and never being paid. His creditors never arrested him, however. If they did so, they knew he would lose his situation; so the poor man went on from week to week, and from month to month, borrowing here and borrowing there, obtaining small advances from loan societies held at public-houses, robbing Peter to pay Paul—always in a muddle, in short; but still smoking his nightly pipes, and drinking his nightly glasses, and singing his nightly songs; the latter with immense applause at the "Admiral Benbow."

"I don't think Simcox's worldly position was at all improved by his having married (in very early life, and direct from the finishing establishment of the Misses Gimp, at Hammersmith) a young lady highly accomplished in the useful and productive arts of tambour-work, and Poonah, painting; but of all domestic or household duties considerably

more ignorant than a Zooloo Kaffir. When Simcox had run through his money, an operation he performed with astonishing celerity, Mrs. Simcox, finding herself with three daughters of tender age and a ruined husband, took refuge in floods of tears; subsequently met the crisis of misfortune with a nervous fever; and ultimately subsided into permanent ill health, curl papers, and shoes down at heel.

When the events took place herein narrated, the three daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Simcox were all grown up. Madeline, aged twenty-two, was a young lady of surprising altitude, with shoulders of great breadth and sharpness of outline, with very large black eyes and very large black ringlets, attributes of which she was consciously proud, but with a nose approaching to—what shall I say?—the snub. Chemists' assistants had addressed acrostics to her; and the young man at the circulating library was supposed to be madly in love with her. Helena, daughter number two, aged twenty, was also tall, had also black eyes, black ringlets, white resplendent shoulders, was the beloved of apothecaries, and the Laura of Petrarchs in the linen-drapery line. These young ladies were both acknowledged, recognised, established as beauties in the Camberwellian district. They dressed, somehow, in the brightest and most variegated colours; they had, somehow, the prettiest of bonnets, the tightest of gloves, the neatest of kid boots. Their sabbatical entrance to the parish church always created a sensation. The chemist's assistant kissed his hand as they passed; the young man at the circulating library laid down his book, and sighed; passing young ladies envied and disparaged; passing young gentlemen admired and aspired; yet, somehow, Miss Madeline would be twenty-three next birthday, and Miss Helena twenty-one, and no swain had yet declared himself in explicit terms; no one had said, "I have a hundred a year, with a prospect of an advance: take it, my heart, and hand." Old Muggers, indeed, the tailor of Acacia Cottages, the friend, creditor, and boon companion of Simcox, had intimated, in his cups, at the "Admiral Benbow," his willingness to marry either of the young ladies; but his matrimonial proposals generally vanished with his inebriety; and he was besides known to be a dreadfully wicked old man, addicted to drinking, smoking, and snuff-taking. As a climax of villany, he was supposed to have two wives already, alive, and resident in different parts of the provinces.

And daughter number three—have I forgotten her? Not by any means. Was she a beauty? No. In the opinion of her sisters, of Camberwell, and of the chemist's assistant, she was *not* a beauty. She had dark eyes; but they were neither brilliant nor piercing. She had dark hair; but wore it in no long or resplendent ringlets. She was an ordinary girl, a "plain little thing," according to the

Camberwell opinion); there was "nothing about her" in the eyes of the chemist's assistant.

This young person (Bessy by name), from the earliest periods of authentic record to the mature age of sixteen, had occupied, in the Simcox household, an analogous position to that of the celebrated Cinderella. She did not exactly sit in the chimney corner among the ashes; but she lighted the fire, waited upon, dressed, and was otherwise the humble and willing drudge of her accomplished relatives. She did not exactly dress in rags; but she trotted about the house and neighbourhood in a shabby brown merino frock, which she had wofully outgrown, a lamentable old beaver bonnet, and a faded Paisley shawl which held a sort of middle rank in appearance, between a duster and a pocket-handkerchief well to do in the world. As a child, she was punished for the things she did not do, and doubly punished for those she did do. As a girl, she ran of errands, fetched the beer, lighted the fire (as I have said), read the sentimental novels to her mamma as she lay upon the sofa, and accompanied her sisters on the pianoforte when they rehearsed those famous songs and duets with which they did terrific execution in the Camberwell circles.

Honest Simcox, like a stupid, undiscerning shiftless man as he was, did not entertain the domestic or Camberwell opinion concerning Bessy. He maintained that she had more sense in her little finger than her sisters put together (with his wife into the bargain, the honest fellow thought, I dare swear, though he did not dare to say so). He called her his little darling, his little Mentor, his willing, patient Betsy-petsy, with other foolish and weak-minded expressions of endearment. What else could you expect of a red-nosed warehouseman's clerk who fuddled himself nightly at the "Admiral Benbow!" Profoundly submissive to his wife in most instances, he had frequently presumed, during Bessy's nonage, to differ from Mrs. Simcox as to the amount of whipping meted out to his youngest daughter for childish delinquencies, and had once even dared to interfere when his lady undertook to inflict that punishment for a fault the child had never committed, and to "stay justice in its mid career." So in process of time the alliance between the snubbed, neglected little girl and her father became of so close a nature as to be almost recognised and permitted by the rest of the family. Bessy was reckoned among the rest of the low company with whom the degraded Simcox chose to associate. She was allowed to pull off his muddy boots, to prepare his dinner, to fill his pipe and mix his grog when he muddled himself at home; and to lead him home, shambling, from the "Admiral Benbow," when he performed that operation abroad. Notably of late times she had been commissioned to fetch her papa home from

Ursine Lane on the eventful quarter-day, and the meek guiding help of Bessy had often saved that infirm old fellow from many a dark and dangerous pitfall. The child would wait patiently outside the doors of public-houses while her father boozed within; she would lead him away gently but firmly from his riotous companions, or, meeting them and taking them aside, would plead passionately, tearfully, that they would not make papa tipsy to-night. Some of the disreputable personages with whom she was brought into such strange contact were quite subdued and abashed by her earnest, artless looks and speech. Jack Flooks himself, formerly of the Stock Exchange, now principally of the bar of the "Bag o' Nails," the very worst, most dissipated and most reckless of Simcox's associates forbore drinking with Bessy's father for one whole week, and actually returned, in a private and mysterious manner, to Bessy two half-crowns he had borrowed of him! So useful was this filial surveillance found to be by the other branches of his family that the quarter-day functions of our plain little Bessy were gradually extended, and became next of weekly and afterwards of diurnal occurrence. It was good to see this girl arrayed in the forlorn beaver bonnet and the faded Paisley shawl, with her mild, beaming, ordinary, little countenance, arrive at about a quarter to eight at the Thames Street corner of Ursine Lane, and there wait patiently until her father's official duties were over. She became almost as well known in the neighbourhood as St. Nicholas Bearward, or as the famous sanctified pump itself. The fellowship porters from Sir John Pigg's wharf touched their caps to her; the majestic beadle of St. Nicholas (a cunning man, omnipotent over the fire escape, king of the keys of the engine-house, and supposed to know where the fire-plug was, much better than the turncock) spoke her kindly; all the clerks in Braddlescroggs's house knew her, nodded to her, smiled at her, and privately expressed their mutual opinions as to what a beast Braddlescroggs was, not to ask that dear little girl in, and let her rest herself, or sit by the fire in winter. The pot-boy of the "Bear and Ragged Staff," in his evening excursions with the supper beer, grew quite enamoured (in his silent, sheepish fashion) of this affectionate daughter, and would, I dare say, had he dared, have offered her refreshment from his begg-can; nay, even the majestic wealthy Mr. Drum, the wholesale grocer and provision merchant, who stood all day with his hands in his pockets, under his own gibbet-like crane, a very Jack Ketch of West India produce, had addressed cheering and benevolent words to her from the depths of his double chin; had conferred figs upon her; had pressed her to enter his saccharine smelling warehouse, and rest herself upon a barrel of prime navy mess beef.

When the Beast of Ursine Lane met Bessy

Simcox he either scowled at her, or made her sarcastic bows, and asked her at what pot-house her father was about to get drunk that night, and whether he had taught her to drink gin, too? Sometimes he growled forth his determination to have no "bits of girls" hanging about his "place;" sometimes he told her that she would not have to come many times more, for that he was determined on discharging that "drunken old dog," her papa. In the majority of instances, however, he passed her without any other notice than a scowl, and a savage rattle of the keys and silver in his pockets. The little maiden trembled fearfully when she saw him, and had quiet fits of weeping (in which a corner of the Paisley shawl was brought into frequent requisition) over against the pump, when he had spoken to her. There was a lad called William Braddlescrogs, with blue eyes and fair hair, who blushed very violently whenever he saw Bessy, and had once been bold enough to tell her that it was a fine evening. In this flagrant crime he was then and there detected by his father, who drove him back into the warehouse.

"As this is quarter-day, my Bessy," was the remark of John Simcox to his daughter, one twenty-eighth of March, "as this is quarter-day, I think, my child, that I will take one glass of ale."

It was about half-past eight, I think, and Bessy and her papa were traversing the large thoroughfare known as the New Kent Road. There is in that vicinity, as you are aware that stunning Champagne Ale House, known as the "Leather Bottel." Into that stunning ale house did John Simcox enter, leaving his little Bessy outside, with fifteen pounds, the balance of what he had already expended of his quarter's salary. The night was very lowering, and rain appeared to be imminent. It came down, presently, in big, pattering drops, but John had promised not to be long.

Why should I tell, *in extenso*, the humiliating tale of how John Simcox got tipsy that night? How he forced all the money, pound by pound, from his little daughter? How, when after immense labour and trouble, he had at last been brought to his own street door, he suddenly started off at an unknown tangent (running hard and straight), and disappeared. How his daughter wandered about, weeping, in the pouring rain, seeking him; how, at two o'clock in the morning, a dismal party arrived at a little house in Camberwell—a very moist policeman, a weeping, shivering, drenched little girl over whom the municipal had in pity thrown his oilskin cape, and a penniless, hatless, drunken man, all covered with mud, utterly sodden, wretched, and degraded. Drop the curtain for pity's sake.

The first impulse of Mrs. Simcox, after duly loading her besotted husband with reproaches, was to beat Bessy. The anger of this matron, generally so gently languid,

was something fearful to view. An enraged sheep is frantic. She was frustrated, however, in her benevolent intention, first by the policeman, afterwards by Bessy herself, who, wet, fatigued, and miserable (but in an artful and designing manner, no doubt), first contrived to faint away, and next day chose to fall into a high fever.

In this fever—in the access thereof—she lay three long weeks. In a lamentable state of languor, she lay many long weeks more. The brokers were in again. The parlour carpet was taken up and sent to the pawnbroker's. There were no invalid comforts in the house; no broth, nor chickens to make it, no arrowroot, no sago, no Port wine, no anything to speak of, that was really wanted.

Stay, I am wrong. There were plenty of doctors; there was plenty of doctor's stuff. The chemists, apothecaries, and medical practitioners of the neighbourhood, treated the Simcox family, and the little sick daughter, in particular, in a liberal and considerate manner. Not one charged a penny, and all were unremitting in attention. Kind-hearted Mr. Sphoon, of Walworth, sent in—so to speak—a hamper of quinine. Young Tuckett, close by, who had just passed the Hall and College, and opened his shop, offered to do anything for Bessy. He would have dissected her even, I am sure. Great Doctor Bibby came from Camberwell Grove, in his own carriage, with his own footman with the black worsted tags on his shoulder, and majestically ordered change of air, and red Port wine for Bessy Simcox. A majestic man was Dr. Bibby, and a portly, and a deep-voiced, and a rich. His boots creaked, and his carriage springs oscillated—but he left a sovereign on the Simcox mantelpiece, for all that.

So there was something of those things needful in the little house at Camberwell. There was besides, a certain nurse, active, devoted, patient, soothing, and gentle. Not Mrs. Simcox, who still lay on the sofa, now reading the sentimental novels, now moaning over the family difficulties. Not the Misses Simcox, who though they did tend their sister, did it very fretfully and cross-grainedly, and unanimously declared that the child made herself out to be a great deal worse than she really was. This nurse had rather a red nose, and a tremulous hand. He came home earlier from the City now; but he never stopped at the stunning Champagne Ale House. He had not been to the "Admiral Benbow" for seven weeks. He sat by his daughter's pillow; he read to her; he carried her in his arms like a child as she was; he wept over the injury he had done her; he promised, and meant, and prayed for, amendment.

But what were the attentions of the doctors, the hamper of quinine, the sovereign on the mantelpiece, even, after all? They were but drops in the great muddled ocean of the,

Simcox embarrassments. A sovereign would not take Bessy to Malvern or Ventnor: the quinine would not give her red Fort wine and change of air. The nurse grew desperate. There was no money to be borrowed, none to be obtained from the pawnbroker, none to be received until next quarter-day—before which; another month must elapse. Should he attempt to obtain a small advance of money from the Beast himself—the terrible Braddlescrogs? Should he offer him two hundred per cent. interest; should he fall down on his knees before him; should he write him a supplicatory letter; should he?

One evening, Simcox came home from the office with many smiles upon his face. He had borrowed the money, after many difficulties, from the chief clerk. Ten pounds. He would have to pay very heavy interest for it, but never mind. Mrs. Simcox should take Bessy to Ventnor for a fortnight or three weeks. Quarter-day would soon come round. Soon come round. Now and then his family remarked, that the many smiles dropped from their papa's countenance like a mask, and that, underneath, he wore a look rather haggard, rather weary, rather terrible; but then, you see, he would have to pay such a heavy interest for the ten pounds. Mrs. Simcox was delighted at the prospect of her country trip; poor Bessy smiled and thanked her papa; and the two Miss Simcoxes—who had their own private conviction that an excursion to the sea-side was the very thing for them; to air their beauty as it were—and not for that designing bit of a thing, Bessy, with her pale face—the two Miss Simcoxes, I say, went to bed in a huff.

To the pleasant Island of Wight in the British Channel, and the county of Hampshire did the little convalescent from Camberwell and her parent proceed. Bessy gathered shells and sea-weeds, and bought sand pictures on crabboard by the Undercliff, and sand in bottles, and saw the donkey at Carisbrooke Castle, and wondered at Little St. Lawrence Church, and the magnificent yachting dandies at Cowes and Ryde, until her pale face grew quite rosy, and her dark eyes had something of a sparkle in them. Her mamma lay on the sofa as usual, exhausted the stock of sentimental novels in the Ventnor circulating library, varying these home-occupations occasionally by taking exercise in a wheel-chair, and "nagging" at Bessy. The pair came back to London together, and were at the little mansion at Camberwell about a week before quarter-day. The peccant Simcox had been exemplarily abstemious during their absence; but his daughters had not been able to avoid remarking that he was silent, reserved, and anxious-looking. You see he had to pay such heavy interest for the ten pounds he had borrowed of the chief clerk.

Three days before quarter-day, it was ten minutes to eight p.m., and Bessy Simcox was waiting for her father. She was confident, hopeful, cheerful now: she thanked God for her illness and the change it had wrought in her dear papa. Ten minutes to eight, and a hot summer's evening. She was watching the lamp-lighter going round with his ladder and his little glimmering lantern, when she was accosted by one of Mr. Braddlescrogs's porters. He was an ugly forbidding man with a vicious-looking fur cap (such as porters of workhouses and wicked skippers of colliers wear), and had never before saluted or spoken to her. She began to tremble violently when John Malingerer (a special favourite of the Beast's, if he could have favoured any one, and supposed to be a porter after his own heart), addressed her.

"Hi!" said the porter, "you're wanted."

"Me—wanted? Where? By whom?" stammered Bessy.

"Counting-house—Governor—Business," replied John Malingerer, in short growling periods.

Bessy followed him, still trembling. The porter walked before her, looming like the genius of Misfortune. He led her through dingy wareroom after wareroom, counting-house after counting-house, where the clerks all were silent and subdued. He led her at last into a dingy sanctum, dimly lighted by one shaded lamp. In this safe there were piles of dingy papers and more dingy ledgers; great piles of accounts on hooks in the wall, with their long iron necks and white bodies like ghosts of dead bills who had hanged themselves; a huge iron safe throwing hideous shadows against the wall, and three silent men.

That is to say:

John Simcox, white, trembling and with wild eyes.

The Beast, neither more nor less a Beast than he usually was.

A tall man with a very sharp shirt collar, a great coat, a black stock; very thin iron-grey hair; a face which looked as if it had once been full of wrinkles and furrows which had been half ironed out; very peculiar and very heavy boots, brown berlin gloves, and a demeanour which confirmed you immediately in a conviction that were you to strike at him violently with a sledge hammer, his frame would give forth in response no fleshy "thud," but a hard metallic ring.

The Beast was standing up: his back against a tall desk on spectral legs, his hands in his pockets. So also, standing, in a corner, was Simcox. So also, not exactly anywhere but somewhere, somehow, and about Simcox, and about Bessy, and particularly about the door and the iron-safe, in which he seemed to take absorbing interest, was the tall man in the peculiar boots.

"Come here, my girl," said the grating voice of Bernard Braddlescrogs the Beast.

My girl came there, to the foot of a table, as she was desired. She heard the grating voice; she heard, much louder, the beating of her own heart; she heard, loudest of all, a dreadful voice within her crying over and over again that papa had borrowed ten pounds, and that he would have to pay very heavy interest for it, and that quarter day would soon come round, soon come round.

"This person's name is Lurcher," pursued the Beast.

The person coughed. The cough struck on the girl's heart like a knell. One.

"He is an officer."

An officer of what? Of the Household Brigade; of the yeomanry cavalry; of the Sheriff of Middlesex's battalion, a custom-house officer, a naval officer, a relieving officer? But Bessy knew in a moment. She might have known it at first from the peculiar boots the officer wore—boots such as no other officer, or man, or woman can wear. But her own heart told her. It said plainly: "This is a police-officer, and he has come to take your father into custody."

It was all told directly. Oh Bessy, Bessy! The ten pounds borrowed from the chief clerk, for which he would have to pay such heavy interest. The ten pounds were borrowed from the Petty Cash. The miserable Simcox's account was fifteen pounds deficient; he had promised to refund the money on quarter-day; he had begged and prayed for time; the Beast was inexorable, and Lurcher, the officer, was there to take him to prison for embezzlement.

"You daughter of this man," said the Beast; "you must go home without him. You tell his wife, and the rest of his people, that I have locked him up, and that, I'll transport him, for robbery."

"Robbery, no, sir," cried poor Simcox from the corner. "Before God, no! It was only for—"

"Silence!" said the Beast. "I'll prosecute you, I'll transport you, I'll hang you. By G—, I'll reform you, somehow. Girl," he continued, turning to Bessy. "Go home. Stop! I'll send a clerk with you to see if there are any of my goods at home. I dare say there are, and you'll move 'em to-night. You won't though. I'll have a search-warrant. I'll put you all in gaol. I'll transport you all. Come here, one of you fellows in the office" (this with a roar), "and go with this girl to Camberwell. Lurcher, take the rascal away."

What was poor Bessy to do? What could she do but fall down on her knees, clapping those stern knees before her? What could she do, but amid sobs and broken articulation say that it was all her fault? That it was for her, her dear papa had taken the money. That for her use it had been spent. What could she do but implore the Beast, for the love of heaven, for the love of his own son, for the love of his dead father and mother, to

spare the object of his wrath, to send her to prison, to take all they had, to show them mercy, as he hoped mercy to be shown to him hereafter?

She did all this and more. It was good, though pitiful, to see the child on her knees in her mean dress, with her streaming eyes, and her poor hair all hanging about her eyes, and to hear her artless, yet passionate supplications. The Beast moved nor muscle nor face; but it is upon record that Mr. Lurcher, after creaking about on the peculiar boots for some seconds, turned aside into the shadow of the iron safe, and blew his nose.

"Lurcher," observed the Beast, "Wait a moment before I give this man into your charge."

Mr. Lurcher bent some portion of his body between his occiput and his spine, and, considering himself temporarily relieved from the custody of his prisoner, threw the whole force of his contemplative energies into the iron safe, in which, as a subject, he appeared immediately to bury himself.

"Come here!" was the monosyllabic command of the Beast; addressed both to father and daughter. He led them into yet an inner sanctum, a sort of cupboard, full of books and papers, where there was a dreadful screw copying press, like an instrument of torture in the Inquisition.

"I will spare your father, child, and retain him in his situation," continued the Beast, without ever taking his hands from his pockets, or altering an inflection of his voice, "on these, and these conditions only. My housekeeper is old and blind, and I shall soon turn her adrift, and let her go to the workhouse—everybody says so, I believe. The short time she will remain, she will be able to instruct you in as much as I shall require of you. You will have to keep this house for me and my clerks, and you must never quit it save once in six weeks, for six hours at a time; and I expect you to adhere to this engagement for two years. All communication between you and your family, save during your hours of liberty, I strictly prohibit. You will have twenty pounds a year as wages, half of which can go to augment your father's salary. At the same time I shall require from him a written acknowledgment that he has embezzled my monies; and if you quit my service I shall use it against him, ruin him, and imprison him. Make up your mind quickly, for the policeman is waiting."

What was poor Bessy to do? To part from her dear father, never to see him save at intervals, and then only for a short time; to know that he was in the same house, and not be able to run and embrace him! All this was hard, very hard, but what would not Bessy do to save her father from ruin and disgrace and a prison? She would have laid down her life for him, she would have cheerfully consented never to see him again—till the

great day comes, when we shall all meet to part no more. She consented. Mr. Lurcher was privately spoken to and dismissed; the Beast subsided into his usual taciturnity; Bessy led her stricken, broken, trembling parent home. They passed through the long dingy ware-rooms: the clerks whispering and looking as they passed.

Bessy's wardrobe was not sufficiently voluminous to occasion the expenditure of any very great time in packing. It was soon put up, in a very small, shabby black box, studded with brass nails—many of them deficient. This, with Bessy herself, arrived at nine o'clock the next morning, as per agreement, at the Cheapside corner of Ursine Lane, where one of Mr. Braddlescrogg's porters was waiting; who brought Bessy and her box to the dismal Manchester warehouse owned by the Beast of Ursine Lane.

And here, in the top floor of this lugubrious mansion, lived, for two long years, Bessy Simcox. At stated periods she saw her family for a few hours, and then went back to her prison-house. She carved the beef and mutton for the hungry clerks, she mended their linen, she gave out candles, she calculated washing bills. The old, old story of Beauty and the Beast was being done over again in Ursine Lane, Cheapside. Bessy ripened into a Beauty, in this dismal hot-house; and the Beast was—as I have told you he always was. Beauty dwelt in no fairy palace; surrounded by no rose-bushes, no sweet-smelling gardens, no invisible hands to wait on her at supper. It was all hard, stern, uncompromising reality. She had to deal with an imperious, sullen, brutal master. Everybody knew it. She dealt with him as Bessy had the art of dealing with every one. She bore with him meekly, gently, patiently. She strove to win his forbearance, his respect. She won them both, and more—his love.

Yes, his love! Don't be afraid: the Beast never changed to Prince Azor. He never lay among the rosebushes sick to death, and threatening to die unless Beauty married him. But at the end of the two years—when their contract was at an end, and when its fulfilment had given him time to know Bessy well, and to save the father through the child—he besought Bessy to remain with him in the same capacity, offering her munificent terms and any degree of liberty she required as regarded communication with her family. Bessy stayed. She stayed two years; she stayed three; she stays there, now, to witness if I lie.

Not alone however. It occurred to William B., junior—the lad with the blue eyes and fair hair—to grow up to be a tall young man, and to fall violently in love with the pretty little housekeeper. It occurred to his father, instead of smiting him on the hip immediately, or eating him up alive in wild beast fashion, to tell him he was a very sensible fellow, and to

incite Bessy (we must call her Beauty now) to encourage his addresses, which indeed, dear little puss! she was nothing loth to do. So Beauty was married. Not to the Beast, but to the Beast's son; and Beauty and William and the Beast all removed to a pretty house in the prettiest country near London, where they dwell to this day, again to witness if I lie.

The Beast is a Beast no longer. Everybody admits that he is not a Beast now; some few are even doubtful whether he ever was a Beast. He carries on the Ursine Lane business (in partnership with his son) still, and is a very rough-headed and rough-voiced old man. But the rough kernel and rough integument are worn away from his heart, and he is genial and jovial among his dependents. Charitable in secret, he had always been, even in his most brutish times; and you are not to believe (for Braddlescrogg talked nonsense sometimes and he knew it) that the old housekeeper, when she became blind or bedridden was sent adrift or to the workhouse; that old John Simcox was not allowed sufficient funds for his pipe and his glass (in strict moderation) at the Admiral Benbow; or that the two Misses Simcox, when they married at last (after superhuman exertions), went dowderless. No. The Beast remembered, and was generous to them all.

THE ANGEL'S STORY.

Through the blue and frosty heavens,
Christmas stars were shining bright;
The glistening lamps of the great City
Almost matched their gleaming light;
And the winter snow was lying,
And the winter winds were sighing,
Long ago one Christmas night.

While from every tower and steeple,
Pealing bells were sounding clear,
(Never with such tones of gladness,
Save when Christmas time is near)
Many a one that night was merry
Who had toiled through all the year.

That night saw old wrongs forgiven,
Friends, long parted, reconcile;
Voices, all unused to laughter,
Eyes that had forgot to smile,
Anxious hearts that feared the morrow,
Freed from all their care awhile.

Rich and poor felt the same blessing
From the gracious season fall;
Joy and plenty in the cottage;
Peace and feasting in the hall;
And the voices of the children
Ringing clear above it all!

Yet one house was dim and darkened:
Gloom, and sickness, and despair
Abiding in the gilded chamber,
Climbing up the marble stair,
Stillling even the voice of mourning—
For a child lay dying there.

Broken cushions fell around him,
Velvet carpets brushed the tread,
Many costly toys were lying,
All unheeded, by his bed;
And his tangled golden ringlets
Were on downy pillows spread.

All the skill of the great City
To save that little life was vain;
That little thread from being broken;
That fatal word from being spoken;
Nay, his very mother's pain,
And the mighty love within her,
Could not give him health again.

And she knelt there still beside him,
She alone with strength to smile,
And to promise he should suffer
No more in a little while,
And with murmur'd song and story
The long weary hours beguile.

Suddenly an unseen Presence
Checked those constant moaning cries,
Stilled the little heart's quick fluttering,
Raised the blue and wondering eyes,
Fixed on some mysterious vision,
With a startled sweet surprise.

For a radiant angel hovered
Smiling o'er the little bed;
White his raiment, from his shoulders
Snowy dove-like pinions spread,
And a starlike light was shining
In a Glory round his head.

While, with tender love, the angel
Leaning o'er the little nest,
In his arms the sick child folding,
Laid him gently on his breast,
Sobs and wailings from the mother,
And her darling was at rest.

So the angel, slowly rising,
Spread his wings; and, through the air,
Bore the pretty child, and held him
On his heart with loving care,
A red branch of blooming roses
Placing softly by him there.

While the child thus clinging, floated
Towards the mansions of the Blest,
Gazing from his shining guardian
To the flowers upon his breast,
Thus the angel spake, still smiling
On the little heavenly guest:

"Know, O little one! that Heaven
Does no earthly thing disdain,
Man's poor joys find there an echo
Just as surely as his pain;
Love, on earth so feebly striving,
Lives divine in Heaven again!

"Once, in yonder town below us,
In a poor and narrow street,
Dwelt a little sickly orphan,
Gentle aid, or pity sweet,
Never in life's rugged pathway
Guided his poor tottering feet.

"All the striving anxious forethought
That should only come with age,
Weighed upon his baby spirit,
Showed him soon life's sternest page;
Grim Want was his nurse, and Sorrow
Was his only heritage."

"All too weak for childish pastimes
Drearly the hours sped;
On his hands so small and trembling
Leaning his poor aching head,
Or, through dark and painful hours,
Lying sleepless on no bed.

"Dreaming strange and longing fancies
Of cool forests far away;
Dreams of rosy happy children,
Laughing merrily at play;
Coming home through green lanes, begging
Trailing branches of white May.

"Scarcely a glimpse of the blue heavens
Glimed above the narrow street,
And the sultry air of Summer
(That you called so warm and sweet,)
Fevered the poor Orphan, dwelling
In the crowded alley's heat.

"One bright day, with feeble footsteps
Slowly forth he dared to crawl,
Through the crowded city's pathways,
Till he reached a garden-wall;
Where 'mid princely halls and mansions
Stood the lordliest of all.

"There were trees with giant branches,
Velvet glades where shadows hide;
There were sparkling fountains glancing,
Flowers whose rich luxuriant pride
Wanted a breath of precious perfume
To the child who stood outside.

"He against the gate of iron
Pressed his wan and wistful face,
Gazing with an awe-struck pleasure
At the glories of the place;
Never had his fairest day-dream
Shone with half such wondrous grace.

"You were playing in that garden,
Throwing blossoms in the air,
And laughing when the petals floated
Downward on your golden hair;
And the fond eyes watching o'er you,
And the splendour spread before you,
Told, a House's Hope was there.

"When your servants, tired of seeing
His pale face of want and woe,
Turning to the ragged Orphan,
Gave him coin, and bade him go,
Down his cheeks so thin and wasted,
Bitter tears began to flow.

"But that look of childish sorrow
On your tender young heart fell,
And you plucked the reddest roses
From the tree you loved so well,
Passing them through the stern grating,
With the gentle word, 'Farewell!'

"Dazzled by the fragrant treasure
And the gentle voice he heard,
In the poor forlorn boy's spirit,
Joy the sleeping Scraph stirred;
In his hand he clasped the flowers,
In his heart the loving word.

"So he crept to his poor garret,
Poor no more, but rich and bright;
For the holy dreams of childhood—
Love, and Rest, and Hope, and Light—
Floated round the Orphan's pillow
Through the starry summer night."

"Day dawned, yet the visions lasted;
All too weak to rise he lay;
Did he dream that none spake harshly—
All were strangely kind that day?
Yes; he thought his treasured roses
Must have charmed all ill away.

"And he smiled, though they were fading;
None by one their leaves were shed;
'Such bright things could never perish,
They would bloom again,' he said.
When the next day's sun had risen
Child and flowers both were dead.

"Know, dear little one! our Father
Does no gentle deed disdain;
And in hearts that beat in heaven,
Still all tender thoughts remain;
Love on the cold earth beginning
Lives divine and pure again!"

Thus the angel ceased, and gently
O'er his little burthen leant;
While the child gazed from the shining
Loving eyes that o'er him bent,
To the blooming roses by him,
Wondering what that mystery meant.

Then the radiant angel answered,
And with holy meaning smiled:

"Ere your tender, loving spirit
Saw and the hard world defied,
Mercy gave me leave to seek you;—
I was once that little child!"

THE SQUIRE'S STORY.

In the year seventeen hundred and sixty-nine, the little town of Barford was thrown into a state of great excitement by the intelligence that a gentleman (and "quite the gentleman," said the landlord of the George Inn), had been looking at Mr. Clavering's old house. This house was neither in the town nor in the country. It stood on the outskirts of Barford, on the road-side leading to Derby. The last occupant had been a Mr. Clavering—a Northumberland gentleman of good family—who had come to live in Barford while he was but a younger son; but when some elder branches of the family died, he had returned to take possession of the family estate. The house of which I speak was called the White House, from its being covered with a greyish kind of stucco. It had a good garden to the back, and Mr. Clavering had built capital stables, with what were then considered the latest improvements. The point of good stabling was expected to let the house, as it was in a hunting county; otherwise it had few recommendations. There were many bed-rooms; some entered through others, even to the number of five, leading one beyond the other; several sitting-rooms of the small and poky kind, wainscotted round with wood, and then painted a heavy slate colour; one good dining-room, and a drawing-room over it, both looking into the garden, with pleasant bow-windows.

• Such was the accommodation offered by

the White House. It did not seem to be very tempting to strangers, though the good people of Barford rather piqued themselves on it, as the largest house in the town; and as a house in which "townspeople" and "county people" had often met at Mr. Clavering's friendly dinners. To appreciate this circumstance of pleasant recollection, you should have lived some years in a little country town, surrounded by gentlemen's seats. You would then understand how a bow or a courtesy from a member of a county family elevates the individuals who receive it almost as much, in their own eyes, as the pair of blue garters fringed with silver did Mr. Bickerstaff's ward. They trip lightly on air for a whole day afterwards. Now Mr. Clavering was gone, where could town and county mingle?

I mention these things that you may have an idea of the desirability of the letting of the White House in the Barfordites' imagination; and to make the mixture thick and slab, you must add for yourselves the bustle, the mystery, and the importance which every little event either causes or assumes in a small town; and then, perhaps, it will be no wonder to you that twenty ragged little urchins accompanied "the gentleman" aforesaid to the door of the White House; and that, although he was above an hour inspecting it under the auspices of Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, thirty more had joined themselves on to the wondering crowd before his exit, and awaited such crumbs of intelligence as they could gather before they were threatened or whipped out of hearing distance. Presently out came "the gentleman" and the lawyer's clerk. The latter was speaking as he followed the former over the threshold. The gentleman was tall, well dressed, handsome; but there was a sinister cold look in his quick-glancing, light blue eye, which a keen observer might not have liked. There were no keen observers among the boys, and ill-conditioned gaping girls. But they stood too near; inconveniently close; and the gentleman, lifting up his right hand, in which he carried a short riding whip, dealt one or two sharp blows to the nearest, with a look of savage enjoyment on his face as they moved away whimpering and crying. An instant after, his expression of countenance had changed.

"Here!" said he, drawing out a handful of money, partly silver, partly copper, and throwing it into the midst of them. "Scramble for it! fight it out, my lads! come this afternoon, at three, to the George, and I'll throw you out some more." So the boys hurrahed for him as he walked off with the agent's clerk. He chuckled to himself, as over a pleasant thought. "I'll have some fun with those lads," he said; "I'll teach 'em to come prowling and crying about me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make the money so hot in the fire-shovel that it shall burn their fingers. You come and see the faces and the howling."

I shall be very glad if you will dine with me at two; and by that time I may have made up my mind respecting the house."

Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, agreed to come to the George at two, but, somehow, he had a distaste for his entertainer. Mr. Jones would not like to have said, even to himself, that a man with a purse full of money, who kept many horses, and spoke familiarly of noble-men—above all, who thought of taking the White House—could be anything but a gentleman; but still the uneasy wonder as to who this Mr. Robinson Higgins could be, filled the clerk's mind long after Mr. Higgins, Mr. Higgins's servants, and Mr. Higgins's stud had taken possession of the White House.

The White House was re-stuccoed (this time of a pale yellow colour), and put into thorough repair by the accommodating and delighted landlord; while his tenant seemed inclined to spend any amount of money on internal decorations, which were showy and effective in their character, enough to make the White House a nine days' wonder to the good people of Barford. The slate-coloured paints became pink, and were picked out with gold; the old-fashioned bannisters were replaced by newly gilt ones; but, above all, the stables were a sight to be seen. Since the days of the Roman Emperor never, was there such provision made for the care, the comfort, and the health of horses. But every one said it was no wonder, when they were led through Barford, covered up to their eyes, but curving their arched and delicate necks, and prancing with short high steps, in repressed eagerness. Only one groom came with them; yet they required the care of three men. Mr. Higgins, however, preferred engaging two lads out of Barford; and Barford highly approved of his preference. Not only was it kind and thoughtful to give employment to the lounging lads themselves, but they were receiving such a training in Mr. Higgins's stables as might fit them for Doncaster or Newmarket. The district of Derbyshire in which Barford was situated, was too close to Leicestershire not to support a hunt and a pack of hounds. The master of the hounds was a certain Sir Harry Manley, who was *out* a huntsman *and nullus*. He measured a man by the "length of his fork," not by the expression of his countenance, or the shape of his head. But as Sir Harry was wont to observe, there was such a thing as too long a fork, so his approbation was withheld until he had seen a man on horseback; and if his seat there was square and easy, his hand light, and his courage good, Sir Harry hailed him as a brother.

Mr. Higgins attended the first meet of the season, not as a subscriber but as an amateur. The Barford huntsmen piqued themselves on their bold riding; and their knowledge of the country came by nature; yet this new strange man, whom nobody knew, was in at the death, sitting on his horse, both well breathed

and calm, without a hair turned on the sleek skin of the latter, supremely addressing the old huntsman as he hacked off the tail of the fox; and he, the old man, who was testy even under Sir Harry's slightest rebuke, and flew out on any other member of the hunt that dared to utter a word against his sixty years' experience as stable-boy, groom, poacher, and what not—he, old Isaac Wormeley, was meekly listening, to the wisdom of this stranger, only now and then giving one of his quick, up-turning, cunning glances, not unlike the sharp o'er-canny looks of the poor deceased Reynard, round whom the hounds were howling, unadmonished by the short whip, which was now tucked into Wormeley's well-worn pocket. When Sir Harry rode into the copse—full of dead brushwood and wet tangled grass—and was followed by the members of the hunt, as one by one they cantered past, Mr. Higgins took off his cap and bowed—half deferentially, half insolently—with a lurking smile in the corner of his eye at the discomfited looks of one or two of the laggards. "A famous run, sir," said Sir Harry. "The first time you have hunted in our country, but I hope we shall see you often."

"I hope to become a member of the hunt, sir," said Mr. Higgins.

"Most happy—proud, I'm sure, to receive so daring a rider among us. You took the Cropper-gate, I fancy; while some of our friends here"—scowling at one or two cowards by way of finishing his speech. "Allow me to introduce myself—master of the hounds" he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for the card on which his name was formally inscribed. "Some of our friends here are kind enough to come home with me to dinner; might I ask for the honour?"

"My name is Higgins," replied the stranger, bowing low. "I am only lately come to occupy the White House at Barford, and I have not as yet presented my letters of introduction."

"Hang it!" replied Sir Harry; "a man with a seat like yours, and that good brush in your hand, might ride up to any door in the county (I'm a Leicestershire man!), and be a welcome guest. Mr. Higgins, I shall be proud to become better acquainted with you over my dinner table."

Mr. Higgins knew pretty well how to improve the acquaintance thus begun. He could sing a good song, tell a good story, and was well up in practical jokes; with plenty of that keen wordly sense, which seems like an instinct in some men, and which in this case taught him on whom he might play off such jokes, with impunity from their resentment, and with a security of applause from the more boisterous, vehement, or prosperous. At the end of twelve months Mr. Robinson Higgins was, out-and-out, the most popular member of Barford hunt; had beaten all the others by a couple of lengths,

as his first patron, Sir Harry, observed one evening, when they were just leaving the dinner-table of an old hunting squire in the neighbourhood.

"Because, you know," said Squire Hearn, holding Sir Harry by the button—"I mean, you see, this young spark is looking sweet upon Catherine; and she's a good girl, and will have ten thousand pounds down the day she's married, by her mother's will; and—excuse me, Sir Harry—but I should not like my girl to throw herself away."

Though Sir Harry had a long ride before him, and but the early and short light of a new moon to take it in, his kind heart was so much touched by Squire Hearn's trembling fearful anxiety, that he stopped, and turned back into the dining-room to say, with more asseverations than I care to give:

"My good Squire, I may say, I know that man pretty well by this time; and a better fellow never existed. If I had twenty daughters, he should have the pick of them."

Squire Hearn never thought of asking the grounds for his old friend's opinion of Mr. Higgins; it had been given with too much earnestness for any doubts to cross the old man's mind as to the possibility of its not being well founded. Mr. Hearn was not a doubter or a thinker, or suspicious by nature; it was simply his love for Catherine, his only child, that prompted his anxiety in this case; and, after what Sir Harry had said, the old man could totter with an easy mind, though not with very steady legs, into the drawing-room, where his bonny blushing daughter Catherine and Mr. Higgins stood close together on the hearth-rug—he whispering, she listening with downcast eyes. She looked so happy, so like her dead mother had looked when the Squire was a young man, that all his thought was how to please her most. His son and heir was about to be married, and bring his wife to live with the Squire; Barford and the White House were not distant an hour's ride; and, even as these thoughts passed through his mind, he asked Mr. Higgins if he could not stay all night—the young moon was already set—the roads would be dark—and Catherine looked up with a pretty anxiety, which, however, had not much doubt in it, for the answer.

With every encouragement of this kind from the old Squire, it took everybody rather by surprise when one morning it was discovered that Miss Catherine Hearn was missing; and when, according to the usual fashion in such cases, a note was found, saying that she had eloped with "the man of her heart," and gone to Gretta Green, no one could imagine why she could not quietly have stopped at home and been married in the parish church. She had always been a romantic, sentimental girl; very pretty and very affectionate, and very much spoiled, and very much wanting in common sense. Her indulgent father was deeply hurt at this

want of confidence in his never-varying affection; but when his son came, hot with indignation from the Baronet's (his future father-in-law's) house, where every form of law and of ceremony was to accompany his own impending marriage), Squire Hearn pleaded the cause of the young couple with imploring cogency, and protested that it was a piece of spirit in his daughter, which he admired and was proud of. However, it ended with Mr. Nathaniel Hearn's declaring that he and his wife would have nothing to do with his sister and her husband. "Wait till you've seen him, Nat!" said the old Squire, trembling with his distressful anticipations of family discord. "He's an excuse for any girl. Only ask Sir Harry's opinion of him." "Confound Sir Harry! So that a man sits his horse well, Sir Harry cares nothing about anything else. Who is this man—this fellow? Where does he come from? What are his means? Who are his family?"

"He comes from the south—Surrey or Somersetshire, I forget which; and he pays his way well and liberally. There's not a tradesman in Barford but says he cares no more for money than for water; he spends like a prince, Nat. I don't know who his family are, but he seals with a coat of arms which may tell you if you want to know—and he goes regularly to collect his rents from his estates in the south. Oh, Nat! if you would but be friendly, I should be as well pleased with Kitty's marriage as any father in the county."

Mr. Nathaniel Hearn gloomed, and muttered an oath or two to himself. The poor old father was reaping the consequences of his weak indulgence to his two children. Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Hearn kept apart from Catherine and her husband; and Squire Hearn durst never ask them to Levison Hall though it was his own house. Indeed, he stood away as if he wore a culprit's shroud whenever he went to visit the White House; and if he passed a night there, he was fain to equivocate when he returned home the next day; an equivocation which was well interpreted by the surly proud Nathaniel. But the younger Mr. and Mrs. Hearn were the only people who did not visit at the White House. Mr. and Mrs. Higgins were decidedly more popular than their brother and sister-in-law. She made a very pretty sweet-tempered hostess, and her education had not been such as to make her intolerant of any want of refinement in the associates who gathered round her husband. She had gentle smiles for townspeople as well as country people; and unconsciously played an admirable second in her husband's project of making himself universally popular.

But there is some one to make ill-natured remarks, and draw ill-natured conclusions from very simple premises, in every place and in Barford this bird of ill omen was Miss Pratt. She did not hang so much. Mr. Higgins's admirable riding did not fall on

her admiration. She did not drink—so the well-selected wines, so lavishly dispensed among his guests, could never mollify Miss Pratt. She could not bear comic songs, or buffo stories—so, in that way, her approbation was impregnable. And these three secrets of popularity constituted Mr. Higgins's great charm. Miss Pratt sat and watched. Her face looked immovably grave at the end of any of Mr. Higgins's best stories; but there was a keen needle-like glance of her unwinking little eyes, which Mr. Higgins felt rather than saw, and which made him shiver, even on a hot day, when it fell upon him. Miss Pratt was a dissenter, and, to propitiate this female Mordecai, Mr. Higgins asked the dissenting minister whose services she attended to dinner; kept himself and his company in good order; gave a handsome donation to the poor of the chapel. All in vain—Miss Pratt stirred not a muscle more of her face towards graciousness; and Mr. Higgins was conscious that, in spite of all his open efforts to captivate Mr. Davis, there was a secret influence on the other side, throwing in doubts and suspicions, and evil interpretations of all he said or did. Miss Pratt, the little, plain old maid, living on eighty pounds a-year, was the thorn in the popular Mr. Higgins's side, although she had never spoken one uncivil word to him; indeed, on the contrary, had treated him with a stiff and elaborate civility.

The thorn—the grief to Mrs. Higgins was this. They had no children! Oh! how she would stand and envy the careless busy motion of half-a-dozen children; and then, when observed, move on with a deep, deep sigh of yearning regret. But it was as well.

It was noticed that Mr. Higgins was remarkably careful of his health. He ate, drank, took exercise, rested, by some secret rules of his own; occasionally bursting into an excess, it is true, but only on rare occasions—such as when he returned from visiting his estates in the south, and collecting his rents. That unusual exertion and fatigue—for there were no stage-coaches within forty miles of Barford, and he, like most country gentlemen of that day, would have preferred riding if there had been—seemed to require some strange excess to compensate for it; and rumours went through the town, that he shut himself up, and drank enormously for some days after his return. But no one was admitted to these orgies.

One day—they remembered it well afterwards—the hounds met not far from the town; and the fox was found in a part of the wild heath, which was beginning to be enclosed by a few of the more wealthy townspeople, who were desirous of building themselves houses rather more in the country than those they had hitherto lived in. Among these, the principal was a Mr. Dudgeon, the attorney of Barford, and the agent for all the country families about. The firm of Dudgeon

had managed the leases, the marriage settlements, and the wills, of the neighbourhood for generations. Mr. Dudgeon's father had the responsibility of collecting the landowners' rents just as the present Mr. Dudgeon had at the time of which I speak; and as his son and his son's son have done since. Their business was an hereditary estate to them; and with something of the old feudal feeling, was mixed a kind of proud humility at their position towards the squires whose family secrets they had mastered, and the mysteries of whose fortunes and estates were better known to the Messrs. Dudgeon than to themselves.

Mr. John Dudgeon had built himself a house on Wildbury Heath; a mere cottage, as he called it: but though only two stories high, it spread out far and wide, and work-people from Derby had been sent for on purpose to make the inside as complete as possible. The gardens too were exquisite in arrangement, if not very extensive; and not a flower was grown in them but of the rarest species. It must have been somewhat of a mortification to the owner of this dainty place when, on the day of which I speak, the fox after a long race, during which he had described a circle of many miles, took refuge in the garden; but Mr. Dudgeon put a good face on the matter when a gentleman hunter, with the careless insolence of the squires of those days and that place, rode across the velvet lawn, and tapping at the window of the dining-room with his whip handle, asked permission—no! that is not it—rather, informed Mr. Dudgeon of their intention—to enter his garden in a body, and have the fox unearthed. Mr. Dudgeon compelled himself to smile assent, with the grace of a masculine Griselda; and then he hastily gave orders to have all that the house afforded of provision set out for luncheon, guessing rightly enough that a six hours' run would give even homely fare an acceptable welcome. He bore without wincing the entrance of the dirty boots into his exquisitely clean rooms; he only felt grateful for the care with which Mr. Higgins strode about, laboriously and noiselessly moving on the tip of his toes, as he reconnoitred the rooms with a curious eye.

"I'm going to build a house myself, Dudgeon; and, upon my word, I don't think I could take a better model than yours."

"Oh! my poor cottage would be too small to afford any hints for such a house as you would wish to build, Mr. Higgins," replied Mr. Dudgeon, gently rubbing his hands nevertheless at the compliment.

"Not at all! not at all! Let me see. You have dining-room, drawing-room"—he hesitated, and Mr. Dudgeon filled up the blank as he expected.

"Four sitting-rooms and the bed-rooms. But allow me to show you over the house. I confess I took some pains in arranging it, and, though far smaller than what you would

requisite, it may, nevertheless, afford you some hints."

So they left the eating gentlemen with their mouths and their plates quite full, and the scent of the fox overpowering that of the hasty rashers of ham; and they carefully inspected all the ground-floor rooms. Then Mr. Dudgeon said:

"If you are not tired, Mr. Higgins—it is rather my hobby, so you must pull me up if you are—we will go upstairs, and I will show you my sanctum."

Mr. Dudgeon's sanctum was the centre room, over the porch, which formed a balcony, and which was carefully filled with choice flowers in pots. Inside, there were all kinds of elegant contrivances for hiding the real strength of all the boxes and chests required by the particular nature of Mr. Dudgeon's business; for although his office was in Barford, he kept (as he informed Mr. Higgins) what was the most valuable here, as being safer than an office which was locked up and left every night. But, as Mr. Higgins reminded him with a sly poke in the side, when next they met, his own house was not over-secure. A fortnight after the gentlemen of the Barford hunt lunched there, Mr. Dudgeon's strong-box,—in his sanctum upstairs, with the mysterious spring-bolt to the window invented by himself, and the secret of which was only known to the inventor and a few of his most intimate friends, to whom he had proudly shown it;—this strong-box, containing the collected Christmas rents of half-a-dozen landlords, (there was then no bank nearer than Derby,) was rifled; and the secretly rich Mr. Dudgeon had to stop his agent in his purchases of paintings by Flemish artists, because the money was required to make good the missing rents.

The Dogberries and Verges of those days were quite incapable of obtaining any clue to the robber or robbers; and though one or two vagrants were taken up and brought before Mr. Dunover and Mr. Higgins, the magistrates who usually attended in the court-room at Barford, there was no evidence brought against them, and after a couple of nights' durance in the lock-ups they were set at liberty. But it became a standing joke with Mr. Higgins to ask Mr. Dudgeon, from time to time, whether he could recommend him a place of safety for his valuables; or, if he had made any more inventions lately for securing houses from robbers.

About two years after this time—about seven years after Mr. Higgins had been married—one Tuesday evening, Mr. Davis was sitting reading the news in the coffee-room of the George-inn. He belonged to a club of gentlemen who met there occasionally to play at whist, to read what few newspapers and magazines were published in those days, to chat about the market at Derby, and prices all over the country. This Tuesday night, it was a black frost; and few people were in

the room. Mr. Davis was anxious to finish an article in the "Gentleman's Magazine"; indeed, he was making extracts from it, intending to answer it, and yet unable with his small income to purchase a copy. So he staid late; it was past nine, and at ten o'clock the room was closed. But while he wrote, Mr. Higgins came in. He was pale and haggard with cold; Mr. Davis, who had had for some time sole possession of the fire, moved politely on one side, and handed to the new-comer the sole London newspaper which the room afforded. Mr. Higgins accepted it, and made some remark on the intense coldness of the weather; but Mr. Davis was too full of his article, and intended reply, to fall into conversation readily. Mr. Higgins hitched his chair nearer to the fire, and put his feet on the fender, giving an audible shudder. He put the newspaper on one end of the table near him, and sat gazing into the red embers of the fire, crouching down over them as if his very marrow were chilled. At length he said:

"There is no account of the murder at Bath in that paper?" Mr. Davis, who had finished taking his notes, and was preparing to go, stopped short, and asked:

"Has there been a murder at Bath? No! I have not seen anything of it—who was murdered?"

"Oh! it was a shocking, terrible murder!" said Mr. Higgins not raising his look from the fire, but gazing on with his eyes dilated till the whites were seen all round them. "A terrible, terrible murder! I wonder what will become of the murderer? I can fancy the red glowing centre of that fire—look and see how infinitely distant it seems, and how the distance magnifies it into something awful and unquenchable."

"My dear sir, you are feverish; how you shake and shiver!" said Mr. Davis, thinking privately that his companion had symptoms of fever, and that he was wandering in his mind.

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Higgins. "I am not feverish. It is the night which is so cold." And for a time he talked with Mr. Davis about the article in the "Gentleman's Magazine," for he was rather a reader himself, and could take more interest in Mr. Davis's pursuits than most of the people at Barford. At length it drew near to ten, and Mr. Davis rose up to go home to his lodgings.

"No, Davis, don't go. I want you here. We will have a bottle of port together, and that will put Saunders into good humour. I want to tell you about this murder," he continued, dropping his voice, and speaking hoarse and low. "She was an old woman, and he killed her, sitting reading her Bible by her own fireside!" He looked at Mr. Davis with a strange searching gaze, as if trying to find some sympathy in the horror which the idea presented to him.

"Who do you mean, my dear sir? What is this murder you are so full of? No one has been murdered here."

"No, you fool! I tell you it was in Bath!" said Mr. Higgins, with sudden passion; and then calming himself to most velvet-smoothness of manner, he laid his hand on Mr. Davis's knee, there, as they sat by the fire, and gently detaining him, began the narration of the crime he was so full of; but his voice and manner were constrained to a stony quietude; he never looked in Mr. Davis's face; once or twice, as Mr. Davis remembered afterwards, his grip tightened like a compressing vice.

"She lived in a small house in a quiet old-fashioned street, she and her maid. People said she was a good old woman; but for all that she hoarded and hoarded, and never gave to the poor. Mr. Davis, it is wicked not to give to the poor—wicked—wicked, is it not? I always give to the poor, for once I read in the Bible that 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins.' The wicked old woman never gave, but hoarded her money, and saved, and saved. Some one heard of it; I say she threw a temptation in his way, and God will punish her for it. And this man—or it might be a woman, who knows?—and this person—heard also that she went to church in the mornings, and her maid in the afternoons; and so—while the maid was at church, and the street and the house quite still, and the darkness of a winter afternoon coming on—she was nodding over the Bible—and that, mark you! is a sin, and one that God will avenge sooner or later; and a step came in the dusk up the stair, and that person I told you of stood in the room. At first he—no! At first, it is supposed—for, you understand, all this is mere guess work—it is supposed that he asked her civilly enough to give him her money, or to tell him where it was; but the old miser defied him, and would not ask for mercy and give up her keys, even when he threatened her, but looked him in the face as if he had been a baby—Oh, God! Mr. Davis, I once dreamt when I was a little innocent boy that I should commit a crime like this, and I wakened up crying; and my mother comforted me—that is the reason I tremble so now—that and the cold, for it is very very cold!"

"But did he murder the old lady?" asked Mr. Davis. "I beg your pardon, sir, but I am interested by your story."

"Yes! he cut her throat; and there she lies yet in her quiet little parlour, with her face upturned and all ghastly white, in the middle of a pool of blood. Mr. Davis, this wine is no better than water; I must have some brandy!"

Mr. Davis was horror-struck by the story, which seemed to have fascinated him as much as it had done his companion.

"Have they got any clue to the murderer?" said he. Mr. Higgins drank down half a tumbler of raw brandy before he answered.

"No! no clue whatever. They will never be able to discover him, and I should not

wonder—Mr. Davis—I should not wonder if he repented after all, and did bitter penance for his crime; and if so—will there be mercy for him at the last day?"

"God knows!" said Mr. Davis, with solemnity. "It is an awful story," continued he, rousing himself; "I hardly like to leave this warm light room and go out into the darkness after hearing it. But it must be done," buttoning on his great coat—"I can only say I hope and trust they will find out the murderer and hang him. If you'll take my advice, Mr. Higgins, you'll have your bed warmed, and drink a treacle-possot just the last thing; and, if you'll allow me, I'll send you my answer to Philologus before it goes up to old Urban."

The next morning Mr. Davis went to call on Miss Pratt, who was not very well; and by way of being agreeable and entertaining, he related to her all he had heard the night before about the murder at Bath; and really he made a very pretty connected story out of it, and interested Miss Pratt very much in the fate of the old lady—partly because of a similarity in their situations; for she also privately hoarded money, and had but one servant, and stopped at home alone on Sunday afternoons to allow her servant to go to church.

"And when did all this happen?" she asked.

"I don't know if Mr. Higgins named the day; and yet I think it must have been on this very last Sunday."

"And to-day is Wednesday. Ill news travels fast."

"Yes, Mr. Higgins thought it might have been in the London newspaper."

"That it could never be. Where did Mr. Higgins learn all about it?"

"I don't know, I did not ask; I think he only came home yesterday: he had been south to collect his rents, somebody said."

Miss Pratt grunted. She used to vent her dislike and suspicions of Mr. Higgins in a grunt whenever his name was mentioned.

"Well, I shan't see you for some days. Godfrey Merton has asked me to go and stay with him and his sister; and I think it will do me good. Besides," added she, "these winter evenings—and these murderers at large in the country—I don't quite like living with only Peggy to call to in case of need."

Miss Pratt went to stay with her cousin, Mr. Merton. He was an active magistrate, and enjoyed his reputation as such. One day he came in, having just received his letters.

"Bad account of the morals of your little town here, Jessy!" said he, touching one of his letters. "You've either a murderer among you, or some friend of a murderer. Here's a poor old lady at Bath had her throat cut last Sunday week; and I've a letter from the Home Office, asking to lend them 'my very efficient aid,' as they are pleased to call it, towards finding out the culprit. It seems, he

must have been thirsty, and of a comfortable jolly turn; for before going to his horrid work he tapped a barrel of ginger wine the old lady had set by to work; and he wrapped the spigot round with a piece of a letter taken out of his pocket, as may be supposed; and this piece of a letter was found afterwards; there are only these letters on the outside, '*us, Esq., -arford, -egworth,*' which some one has ingeniously made out to mean Barford, near Kegworth. On the other side there is some allusion to a race-horse, I conjecture, though the name is singular enough; '*Church - and - King - and - down - with - the - lump.*'"

Miss Pratt caught at this name immediately; it had hurt her feelings as a dissenter only a few months ago, and she remembered it well.

"Mr. Nat Hearn has—or had (as I am speaking in the witness-box, as it were, I must take care of my tenses), a horse with that ridiculous name."

"Mr. Nat Hearn," repeated Mr. Merton, making a note of the intelligence; then he recurred to his letter from the Home Office again.

"There is also a piece of a small key, broken in the futile attempt to open a desk—well, well. Nothing more of consequence. The letter is what we must rely upon."

"Mr. Davis said that Mr. Higgins told him—" Miss Pratt began.

"Higgins!" exclaimed Mr. Merton, "*us.* Is it Higgins, the blustering fellow that ran away with Nat Hearn's sister?"

"Yes!" said Miss Pratt. "But though he has never been a favourite of mine—"

"*us.*" repeated Mr. Merton. "It is too horrible to think of; a member of the hunt—kind old Squire Hearn's son-in-law! Who else have you in Barford with names that end in *us*?"

"There's Jackson, and Higginson, and Blenkinsop, and Davis and Jones. Cousin! One thing strikes me—how did Mr. Higgins know all about it to tell Mr. Davis on Tuesday what had happened on Sunday afternoon?"

There is no need to add much more. Those curious in lives of the highwaymen may find the name of Higgins as conspicuous among those annals as that of Claude Duval. Kate Hearn's husband collected his rents on the highway, like many another "gentleman" of the day; but, having been unlucky in one or two of his adventures, and hearing exaggerated accounts of the hoarded wealth of the old lady at Bath, he was led on from robbery to murder, and was hung for his crime at Derby, in seventeen hundred and seventy-five.

He had not been an unkind husband; and his poor wife took lodgings in Derby to be near him in his last moments—his awful last moments. Her old father went with her everywhere but into her husband's cell; and wronged her heart by constantly accusing him

self of having promoted her marriage with a man of whom he knew so little. He abdicated his squireship in favour of his son Nathaniel. Nat was prosperous, and the helpless silly father could be of no use to him; out to his widowed daughter the foolish fond old man was all in all; her knight, her protector, her companion—her most faithful loving companion. Only he ever declined assuming the office of her counsellor—shaking his head sadly, and saying—

"Ah! Kate, Kate! if I had had more wisdom to have advised thee better, thou need'st not have been an exile here in Brussels, shrinking from the sight of every English person as if they knew thy story."

I saw the White House not a month ago; it was to let, perhaps for the twentieth time since Mr. Higgins occupied it; but still the tradition goes in Barford that once upon a time a highwayman lived there, and amassed untold treasures; and that the ill-gotten wealth yet remains walled up in some unknown concealed chamber; but in what part of the house no one knows.

Will any of you become tenants, and try to find out this mysterious closet? I can furnish the exact address to any applicant who wishes for it.

UNCLE GEORGE'S STORY.

We had devoted the morning before my wedding day to the arrangement of those troublesome, delightful, endless little affairs, which the world says must be set in order on such occasions; and late in the afternoon, we walked down, Charlotte and myself, to take a last bachelor and maiden peep at the home which, next day was to be ours in partnership. Goody Barnes, already installed as our cook and housekeeper, stood at the door, ready to receive us as we crossed the market-place to inspect our cottage for the twentieth time,—cottage by courtesy,—next door to my father's mansion, by far the best and handsomest in the place. It was some distance from Charlotte's house, where she and her widowed mother lived;—all the way down the lime-tree avenue, then over the breezy common, besides traversing the principal and only street, which terminated in the village market-place.

The front of our house was quakerlike, in point of neatness and humility. But enter! It is not hard to display good taste when the banker's book puts no veto on the choice gems of furniture, which give the finishing touch to the whole. Then pass through, and bestow a glance upon our living rooms looking down upon that greatest of luxuries, a terraced garden, commanding the country—and not a little of that country mine already,—the farm which my father had given me, to keep me quiet and contented at home. For the closing perspective of our view, there was the sea, like a bright blue

rampart rising before us. White-sailed vessels, or self-willed steamers, fitted to and fro for our amusement.

We tripped down the terrace steps, and of course looked in upon the little artificial grotto to the right, which I had caused to be lined throughout with foreign shells and glittering spars,—more gifts from my ever-bountiful father. Charlotte and I went laughingly along the straight gravel walk, flanked on each side with a regiment of dahlias; that led us to the little gate, opening to give us admission to my father's own pleasure-ground and orchard.

The dear old man was rejoiced to receive us. A daughter was what he so long had wished for. We hardly knew whether to smile, or weep for joy, as we all sat together on the same rustic bench, overshadowed by the tulip-tree, which some one said my father had himself brought from North America. But of the means by which he became possessed of many of his choicest treasures, he never breathed a syllable to me. His father, I very well knew, was nothing more than a homely farmer, cultivating no great extent of not too productive sea-side land; but Charlotte's lace dress which she was to wear to-morrow—again another present from him—was, her mother proudly pronounced, valuable and handsome enough for a princess.

Charlotte half whispered, half said aloud that she had no fear now that Richard Leroy, her boisterous admirer, would dare to attempt his reported threat to carry her off to the continent in his cutter. Richard's name made my father frown, so we said no more; we lapsed again into that dreamy state of silent enjoyment, which was the best expression of our happiness.

Leroy's father was called a farmer; but on our portion of the English coast there are many things that are well understood rather than clearly and distinctly expressed; and no one had ever enlightened my ignorance. My father was on speaking terms with him, that was all; courteous, but distant; half timid, half mysterious. He discouraged my childish intimacy with Richard; yet he did not go so far as to forbid it. Once, when I urged him to allow me to accompany young Leroy in his boat, to fish in the Channel one calm and bright summer morning, he peremptorily answered, "No! I do not wish you to learn to be a smuggler." But then he instantly checked himself, and afterwards was more anxious and kind to me than ever. Still Richard and I continued playfellows until we grew up, and both admired Charlotte. He would have made a formal proposal for her hand, if the marked discouragement of her family had not shut out every opportunity. This touched his pride, and once made him declare, in an off-hand way, that it would cost him but very little trouble to land such a light cargo as that, some pleasant evening, in France, or even on one of the Azore

Islands, if orange groves and orange blossoms were what my lady cared about. It is wonderful how far, and how swiftly, heedless words do fly when once they are uttered. Such speeches did not close the breach, but, instead, laid the first foundation for one of those confirmed estrangements which village neighbourhoods only know. The repugnance manifested by Charlotte's friends was partly caused by the mystery which hung to Richard's ample means. The choice was unhesitatingly made in my favour. In consequence, as a sort of rejected candidate, Richard Leroy really did lie, amongst us, under an unexpressed and indefinite ban, which was by no means likely to be removed by the roystering, scornful air of superiority with which he mostly spoke of, looked at, and treated us.

Charlotte and I took leave of my father on that grey September evening with the full conviction that every blessing was in store for us which affection and wealth had the power to procure. Over the green, and up the lime-tree avenue, and then, good-night, my lady-love! Good-night, thus parting, for the very last time. To-morrow—ah! think of to-morrow. The quarters of the church clock strike half-past nine. Good-night, dear mother-in-law. And, once more, good-night, Charlotte!

It was somewhat early to leave; but my father's plans required it. He desired that we should be married, not at the church of the village where we all resided, but at one distant a short walk, in which he took a peculiar interest—where he had selected the spot for a family burial-place, and where he wished the family registers to be kept. It was a secluded hamlet; and my father had simply made the request that I would lodge for a while at a farm-house there, in order that the wedding might be performed at the place he fixed his heart upon. My duty and my interest were to obey.

"Good night, Charlotte," had not long been uttered, before I was fairly on the way to my temporary home. Our village, and its few scattered lights, were soon left behind, and I then was upon the open down, walking on with a springing step. On one side was spread the English Channel; and from time to time I could mark the appearance of the light at Cape Grinez, on the French coast opposite. There it was, coming and going, flashing out and dying away, with never-ceasing coquetry. The cliff lay between my path and the sea. There was no danger; for, although the moon was not up, it was bright starlight. I knew every inch of the way as well as I did my father's garden walks. In September, however, mists will rise; and, as I approached the valley, there came the off-spring of the pretty stream which ran through it, something like a light cloud running along the ground before the wind. Is there a night-fog coming on? Perhaps there may be. I'

so, better steer quite clear of the cliff, by means of a gentle circuit inland. It is quite impossible to miss the valley; and, once in the valley, it is equally difficult to miss the hamlet. Richard Leroy has been frequently backward and forward the last few evenings: it would be strange if we should chance to meet here, and on such an occasion.

On, and still on, cheerily. In a few minutes more I shall reach the farm, and then, to pass one more solitary night is almost a pleasurable delay, a refinement in happiness. I could sing and dance for joy. Yes, dance all alone, on this elastic turf! There: just one foolish caper; just one—

Good God! is this not the shock of an earthquake? I hasten to advance another step, but the ground beneath me quivers and sinks. I grasp at the side of a yawning pitfall, but grasp in vain. Down, down, down, I fall headlong.

When my senses returned, and I could look about me, the moon had risen, and was shining in at the treacherous hole through which I had fallen. A glance was only too sufficient to explain my position. Why had I always so foolishly refused to allow the farmer to meet me half way, and accompany me to his house every evening; knowing, as I did know, how the chalk and limestone of the district had been undermined in catacombs, sinuous and secret for wells, flint, manure, building materials, and worse purposes? My poor father and Charlotte!

Patience. It can hardly be possible that now, on the eve of my marriage, I am suddenly doomed to a lingering death. The night must be passed here, and daylight will show some means of escape. I will lie down on this heap of earth that fell under me.

Amidst despairing thoughts, and a hideous waking nightmare, daylight slowly came.

The waning moon had not revealed the extremity of my despair; but now it was clearly visible that I had fallen double the height I supposed. But for the turf which had fallen under me, I must have been killed on the spot. The hole was too large for me to creep up, by pressing against it with my back and knees; and there were no friendly knobs or protuberances visible up its smooth sides. The chasm increased in diameter as it descended, like an inverted funnel. I might possibly climb up a wall; but could I creep along a ceiling?

I shouted as I lay; no one answered. I shouted again—and again. Then I thought that too much shouting would exhaust my strength, and unfit me for the task of mounting. I measured with my eye the distances from stratum to stratum of each well-marked layer of chalk. And then, the successive beds of flint—they gave me the greatest hopes. If foot-holes could be only cut! Though the feat was difficult, it might be practicable. The attempt must be made.

I arose, stiff and bruised. No matter. The

first layer of flints was not more than seven or eight feet overhead. Those once reached, I could secure a footing, and obtain a first starting-place for escape. I tried to climb to them with my feet and hands. Impossible; the crumbling wall would not support half my weight. As fast as I attempted to get handhold or footing, it fell in fragments to the ground.

But, a better thought—to dig it away, and make a mound so high that, by standing on it, I could manage to reach the flint with my hands. I had my knife to help me; and, after much hard work, my object was accomplished, and I got within reach of the shelf.

My hands had firm hold of the horizontal flint. They were cut with clinging; but I found that, by raising myself, and then thrusting my feet into the chalk and marl, I could support myself with one hand only, leaving the other free to work. I did work; clearing away the chalk above the flint, so as to give me greater standing-room. At last, I thought I might venture upon the ledge itself. By a supreme effort, I reached the shelf; but moisture had made the chalk unctuous and slippery to the baffled grasp. It was in vain to think of mounting higher, with no point of support, no firm footing. A desperate leap across the chasm afforded not the slightest hope; because, even if successful, I could not for one moment maintain the advantage gained. I was determined to remain on the ledge of flint. Another moment, and a rattling on the floor soon taught me my powerlessness. Down sunk the chalk beneath my weight; and the stony table fell from its fixture, only just failing to crush me under it.

Stunned and cut, and bruised, I spent some time prostrated by half-conscious but acute sensations of misery. Sleep, which as yet I had not felt, began to steal over me, but could gain no mastery. With each moment of incipient unconsciousness, Charlotte was presented to me, first, in her wedding-dress; next, on our terrace beckoning me gaily from the garden below; then, we were walking arm-in-arm in smiling conversation; or seated happily together in my father's library. But the full consciousness which rapidly succeeded presented each moment the hideous truth. It was now broad day; and I realised Charlotte's sufferings. I beheld her awaiting me in her bridal dress; now hastening to the window, and straining her sight over the valley, in the hope of my approach; now stricken down by despair at my absence. My father, too, whose life had been always bound up in mine! These fancies destroyed my power of thought. I felt wild and frenzied. I raved and shouted, and then listened, knowing no answer could come.

But an answer did come: a maddening answer. The sound of bells, dull, dead, and, in my hideous well-hole, just distinguishable. They rang out my marriage-peal. Why was I not buried alive when I first fell?

I could have drunk blood, in my thirst, had it been offered to me. Die I must, I felt full well; but let me not die with my mouth in flame! Then came the struggle of sleep; and then fitful, tantalising dreams. Charlotte appeared to me plucking grapes, and dropping them playfully into my mouth; or catching water in the hollow of her hand, from the little cascade in our grotto, and I drank. But hark! drip, drip, and again drip! Is this madness still? No. There must be water oozing somewhere out of the sides of this detested hole. Where the treacherous wall is slimiest, where the green patches are brightest and widest spread on the clammy sides of my living sulphure, there will be the spot to dig and to search.

Again the knife. Every blow gives a more dead and hollow sound. The chink dislodged is certainly not moister; but the blade sticks fast into wood—the wood of a cask; something slowly begins to trickle down. It is brandy!

Brandy! shall I taste it? Yet, why not? I did; and soon for a time remembered nothing.

I retained a vivid and excited consciousness up to one precise moment, which might have been marked by a stop-watch, and then all outward things were shut out, as suddenly as if a lamp had been extinguished. A long and utter blank succeeded. I have no further recollection either of the duration of time, or of any bodily suffering. Had I died by alcoholic poison—and it is a miracle the brandy did not kill me—then would have been the end of my actual and conscious existence. My senses were dead. If what happened afterwards had occurred at that time, there would have been no story for you to listen to.

Once more, a burning thirst. Hunger had entirely passed away. I looked up, and all was dark; not even the stars or the cloudy sky were to be seen at the opening of my cavern. A shower of earth and heavy stones fell upon me as I lay. I still was barely awake and conscious, and a groan was the only evidence which escaped me that I had again recovered the use of my senses.

"Halloa! What's that down there?" said a voice, whose tone was familiar to me. I uttered a faint but frantic cry.

I heard a moment's whispering, and the hollow echo of departing footsteps, and then all was still again. The voice overhead once more addressed me.

"Courage, George; keep up your spirits! In two minutes I will come and help you. Don't you know me?"

I then did know that it could be no other than my old rival, Richard Leroy. Before I could collect my thoughts, a light glimmered against one side of the well; and then, in the direction opposite the fallen table of flint, and just over it, Richard appeared, with a lantern in one hand, and a rope tied to a stick across

"Have you strength enough left to sit upon this, and to hold by the rope while I haul you up?"

"I think I have," I said. I got the stick under me, and held by the rope to keep steadily on my seat. Richard planted his feet firmly on the edge of his standing-place, and hauled me up. By a sleight of hand and an effort of strength, in which I was too weak to render him the least assistance, he hauled me at the mouth of a subterranean gallery opening into the well. I could just see, on looking back, that if I had only maintained my position on the ledge of flint, and improved it a little, I might, by a daring and vigorous leap, have sprung to the entrance of this very gallery. But those ideas were now useless. I was so thoroughly worn out that I could scarcely stand, and an entreaty for water preceded even my expression of thanks.

"You shall drink your fill in one instant, and I am heartily glad to have helped you; but first let me mention one thing. It is understood that you keep my secret. You cannot leave this place—unless I blindfold you, which would be an insult—without learning the way to return to it; and, of course, what you see along the galleries are to you nothing but shadows and dreams. Have I your promise?"

I was unable to make any other reply than to seize his hand, and burst into tears. How I got from the caverns to the face of the cliff, how thence to the beach, the secluded hamlet, and the sleeping village, does really seem to my memory like a vision. On the way across the downs, Leroy stopped once or twice, more for the sake of resting my aching limbs, than of taking breath or repose himself. During those intervals, he quietly remarked to me how prejudiced and unfair we had all of us been to him; that as for Charlotte, he considered her as a child, a little sister, almost even as a baby plaything. She was not the woman for him: he, for his part, liked a girl with a little more of the devil about her. No doubt he could have carried her off; and no doubt she would have loved him desperately a fortnight afterwards. But, when he had once got her, what should he have done with such a blue-eyed milk-and-water angel as that? Nothing serious to annoy us had ever entered his head. And my father ought not quite to forget the source of his own fortune, and hold himself aloof from his equals; although he might be lying quiet in harbour at present. Really, it was a joke, that, instead of eloping with the bride, he should be bringing home the eloped bridegroom!

I fainted when he carried me into my father's house, and I remember no more than his temporary adieu. But afterwards, all went on slowly and surely. My father and Richard became good friends, and the old gentleman acquired such influence over him, that Leroy's "pleasure trips" soon be-

came rare, and finally ceased altogether. At the last run, he brought a foreign wife over with him, and nothing besides—a Dutch woman of great beauty and accomplishments; who, as he said, was as fitting a helpmate for him, as Charlotte, he acknowledged, was for me. He also took a neighbouring parish church and its appurtenances into favour, and settled down as a landsman within a few miles of us. And, if our families continue to go on in the friendly way they have done for the last few years, it seems likely that a Richard may conduct a Charlotte, to enter their names together in a favourite register-book.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

UNTIL I was fifteen I lived at home with my widowed mother and two sisters. My mother was the widow of an officer, who was killed in one of the battles with Hyder Ali, and enjoyed a pension from the Indian Government. I was the youngest; and soon after my fifteenth birthday she died suddenly. My sisters went to India on the invitation of a distant relation of my mother; and I was sent to school, where I was very unhappy. You will, therefore, easily imagine with what pleasure I received a visit from a handsome jovial old gentleman, who told me that he was my father's elder half-brother; that they had been separated by a quarrel early in life, but that now, being a widower and childless, he had found me out, and determined to adopt me.

The truth was, the old man loved company; and that as his chief income—a large one—was derived from a mine, near which he lived, in a very remote part of the country, he was well pleased to have a young companion who looked like a gentleman, and could be useful as carver, cellar-keeper, and secretary.

Installed in his house, a room was assigned to me, and I had a servant, and a couple of excellent horses. He made me understand that I need give myself no further anxiety on the subject of my future, that I might abandon the idea of proceeding to India in the Company's service, where a cadetship had been secured for me; and that so long as I conformed to his ways, it was no matter whether I studied or not; in fact, it was no matter what I did.

Some time after becoming thus settled at Beechgrove Hall, my uncle's attacks of gout, in spite of the generous living he adopted as a precaution, became so severe, that he was unable to stir out except in a wheeled chair, and it was with difficulty that he was lifted occasionally into his carriage. The consequence was, that to me all his business naturally fell, and although he grumbled at losing my society and attention, he was obliged to send me to London to watch the progress of a canal bill, in which he was deeply interested. It was my first visit to

London. I was well provided with introductions and with funds. My uncle's business occupied me in the morning, for I dreaded his displeasure too much to neglect it; but in the evenings I plunged into every amusement, with all the keen zest of novelty and youth.

I cannot say that up to that period I had never been in love. My uncle had twice seriously warned me that if I made a fool of myself for anything less than a large fortune, he would never forgive me. "If, Sir," he said, when, on the second occasion, he saw me blush and tremble—for I was too proud and too self-willed to bear patiently such control—"If, Sir, you like to make an ass of yourself for a pretty face, like Miss Willington, with her three brothers and five sisters, half of whom you'd have to keep, you may do it with your own money; you shall not do it with mine."

I told my only confidant, Dr. Creoleigh, of this; he answered me, "You have only about a hundred and twenty a year of your own from the estate you inherited from your father, and you are living with your horses and dogs at the rate of five hundred a year. How would you like to see your wife and children dressed and housed like the curate—poor Mr. Serge? Your uncle can't live for ever." The argument was enough for me, who had only found Clara Willington the best partner in a country dance. My time was not come.

My lodgings in London were in a large, old-fashioned house in Westminster—formerly the residence of a nobleman—which was a perfect caravanserai, in the number and variety of its inmates. The best rooms were let to Members of Parliament and persons like myself; but, in the upper floor, many persons of humbler means but genteel pretensions had rooms. Here, I frequently met on the stairs, carrying a roll of music, a tall, elegant female figure, dressed in black, and closely veiled; sometimes, when I had to step on one side, a slight bow was exchanged, but for several weeks that was all. At length my curiosity was piqued; the neat ankles, a small white hand, a dark curl peeping out of the veil, made me anxious to know more.

Enquiries discreetly applied to Mrs. Gough, the housekeeper, told me enough to make me wish to know still more. Her name was Laura Delacourt; not more than twenty or twenty-two years of age; she had lived four years previously with her husband in the best apartments in the house in great luxury for one winter. Mr. Delacourt was a Frenchman and a gambler; very handsome, and very dissipated; it seemed as if it was her fortune they were spending. Mrs. Gough said it was enough to make one's heart break to see that young pretty creature sitting up in her ball dress when her husband had sent her home alone, and remained to play until daylight. They went away, and nothing

more was heard of them until just before my arrival. About that time Madame Delacourt, become very humble, had taken a room on the third floor; had only mentioned her husband, to say he was dead, and now apparently lived by giving music lessons.

It would be too long a story to tell how, by making the old housekeeper my ambassador, by anonymous presents of fruit and game, by offering to take music lessons, and by professing to require large quantities of music copied, I made first the acquaintance, and then became the intimate friend of Madame Delacourt. While keeping me at a freezing distance, and insisting on always having present at our interviews a half-servant half-companion, of that indescribable age, figure, and appearance that is only grown in France, she step by step confided to me her history. An English girl, born in France, the daughter of a war prisoner at Verdun, married to the very handsome Monsieur Delacourt, at sixteen, by a mother who was herself anxious to make a second marriage. In twelve months Monsieur Delacourt had expended her small fortune, and deserted her for an opera dancer of twice her age.

All this, told with a charming accent in melancholy tones—she looking on me sadly with a face which, for expression, I have never seen equalled—produced an impression which those only can understand who have been themselves young and in love.

For weeks this went on, without one sign of encouragement on her part, except that she allowed me to sit with her in the evenings, while her *bonne* faddled at some interminable work, and she sang—O! how divinely! She would receive no presents directly from me; but I sent them anonymously, and dresses and furniture and costly trifles and books reached her daily. I spoke at last; and then she stopped me with a cold faint smile, saying, "Cease! I must not listen to you." She pleaded her too recent widowhood, but I persevered; and, after a time, conquered.

She knew my small fortune and large expectations; she knew that our marriage must be a secret; but she was willing to live anywhere, and was well content to quit a life in which she had known so much trouble.

Before the session ended we were married in an obscure church in the City, with no one present but the clerk and the pew-opener. We spent the few following days at a small inn, in a fishing village. Then I had to leave town and carry out the plan I had proposed. I left my wife in lodgings, under an assumed name, at a town within forty miles of our residence. I had some time previously persuaded my uncle to let me take a lease from Lord Mardall of some untouched mineral ground, on very favourable terms, in a wild thinly-peopled district, which was only visited by the gentry for field sports. This afforded me an excuse for being away from home one or two days every week.

Not far from the mines was the remains of a forest, and coverts abounding in game. In a little sloping dell, one of the Lord Mardall's ancestors had built a small shooting lodge, and one of the keepers in charge had planted there fruit trees and ornamental trees, for which he had a taste, being the son of a gardener. On this wild nest, miles away from any other residence, I had fixed my mind. It was half in ruins, and there was no difficulty in obtaining possession. With money and workmen at my command, very soon a garden smiled, and a fountain bubbled at Orchard Spring; roses and climbing plants covered the steep hill side, and the small stone cottage was made, at a slight expense, a wonder of comfort. The cage being ready I brought my bird there. The first months were all joy, all happiness. My uncle only complained that I had lost my jovial spirits.

I counted every day until the day when I could mount my horse and set off for the new mines. Five-and-twenty miles to ride over a rough mountain road; two fords to cross, often swelled by winter rains; but day or night, moonlight or dark, I dashed along, pressing too often my willing horse with loose rein up and down steep hills; all lost in love and anxious thought I rode, until in the distance the plashing sound of the mountain torrent rolling over our garden cascade, told me I was near my darling.

My horse's footsteps were heard, and before I had passed the avenue the door flew open, the bright fire blazed out, and Laura came forward to receive me in her arms.

I had begged her to get everything she might require from London, and have it sent, to avoid all suspicion, to the nearest port, and then brought by her own servant, a country clown, with a horse and cart; and I had given her a cheque-book, signed in blank. After a time I saw signs of extravagance; in furniture, in dress, but especially in jewels. I remonstrated gently and was met first with tears; then sullen fits. I learned that Laura had a temper for which I was quite unprepared.

The ice was broken; no more pleasant holidays at Orchard Spring. The girl once so humble now assumed a haughty jealous air; every word was a cause of offence; I never came when wanted, or stayed as long as I was required; half my time was spent in scenes of reproach, of tears, hysterics, lamentations; peace was only to be purchased by some costly present. Our maid-servant, a simple country girl, stood amazed; the meek angel had become a tigress. I loved her still, but feared her; yet even love began to fail before so much violence. A dreadful idea began slowly to intrude itself into my mind. Was she tired of me? Was her story of her life true? Had she ever loved me? The next time that I made up my banker's book I was shocked to find that, in the short time since my last remonstrance, Laura had drawn a large sum of money. I lost no time in

galloping to Orchard Spring. She was absent. Where was she? No one knew. Severe cross-examination brought out that she had been away two days; I had not been expected that week. I thought I should have choked.

In the midst I heard the steps of her horse. She came in and confronted me. Looking most beautiful and demoniacal, she defied me; she threatened to expose me to my uncle; declared she had never loved me, but had taken me for a home. At length her frenzy rose to such a height, that she struck me. Then all the violent pent-up rage of my heart broke out. I know not what passed, until I found myself galloping furiously across the mountain ridge that divided the county. Obligated to slacken my pace in passing through a ford, some one spoke to me; how I answered I know not. Whatever it was, it was a mad answer.

I listened to nothing, and pressed on my weary steed until just before reaching the moorland, when, descending into a water-course, he fell on his head, throwing me over with such force, that for some time I lay senseless. I came to myself to find my poor horse standing over me dead lame. I led him on to the inn door, and knocked. It was midnight, and I was not readily admitted. The landlord, when he saw me, started back with an exclamation of horror. My face and shirt were covered with blood.

Worn-out, bruised, and exhausted by fatigue and passion, I slept. I was rudely awakened, and found myself in the custody of two constables. Two mounted gamekeepers, and Lord Mardall had followed and traced me to the inn.

"On what charge?" I asked, amazed.

"For murder," said Lord Mardall.

"The lady at Orchard Spring," said one of the gamekeepers.

I was examined before magistrates; but was unable to give any coherent answers; and was committed to the county jail. My uncle remitted me a sum of money for my defence, and desired never to see me again.

I will give you the description of my trial from the newspapers.

The prisoner had clandestinely married a lady of great beauty and unknown family, probably in station beneath himself, and had placed her under an assumed name in a lonely cottage. After a season of affection quarrels had broken out, which, as would be proved by the servant, had constantly increased in violence. On the last occasion when the unfortunate victim was seen alive by her servant, a quarrel of a most fearful description had commenced. It was something about money. The servant had been so much alarmed, that she had left the cottage and gone down to her mother's, a mile away over the hill, where she had previously been ordered to go to obtain some poultry. From something that passed, her mother would not allow her to return. It would then be proved that Lord Mardall, at-

tracted by the howling of a dog, when out shooting the next morning, had entered the open door of the cottage, and had there found the prisoner's wife dead, with a severe fracture of the skull. The prisoner had been pursued, from some information as to his usual course, and found asleep in the chimney-corner of the Moor Inn, his clothes and shirt deeply stained with blood. It could be proved that he had washed his face and hands immediately on entering, and attributed the blood to the fall from his horse. But on examination no cuts were found on his person sufficient to cause such an effusion of blood.

But, when Lord Mardall was called, he deposed to two facts which produced a great impression in favour of the prisoner. He saw the body at five o'clock, and it was scarcely cold. He had found in one of the victim's hands a lock of hair, which she had evidently torn from her assailant in her struggles; which had been desperate. He had sealed it up, and never let it out of his possession. The nails of her other hand were broken, and were marked with blood. She had no rings on either of her hands, though she was in the habit of wearing a great number; there were marks of rings, and of one which seemed to have been violently torn off. A packet of plate had been found on the kitchen table, a knife, and a loaf marked with blood.

Counsel were not allowed to address the jury for the defence in those days, and the prisoner was not in a condition to speak on the evidence against him. Witnesses for the defence were called, who proved that the lady wore frequently certain peculiar bracelets. The prisoner, who seemed stupefied by his emotions, declined to say anything; but his counsel asked the maid-servant, and also the farmer who occasionally sold meat to Orchard Spring, if they should know the rings and bracelets if they saw them.

He then called Richard Perkins, jailor of the county prison, and asked him these questions:

"Had you any prisoner committed about the same time as the prisoner at the bar?"

"I had a man called Hay-making Dick, for horse stealing, the day after the discovery of the murder."

"Was it a valuable horse?"

"No; it was a mare, blind of one eye, very old, and with a large fen spavin. I knew her well; used to drive her in the gaol cart; but when warm, she was faster than anything about."

"Do you suppose Hay-making Dick took the mare to sell?"

"Certainly not. She would not fetch a crown, except to those that knew her. No doubt he had been up to some mischief, and wanted to get out of the county, only luckily, he rode against the blacksmith that owned the mare and was taken."

The judge thought these questions irrelevant; but, after some conversation, permitted the examination to go on.

"Has Perkins searched the prisoner, and has he found anything of value?"

The gaoler produced two bracelets, four rings—one a diamond hoop, one a seal ring—and a canvass wheat-bag, containing gold, with several French coins. On one of the bracelets was engraved "Charles to Laura," and a date. In answer to another question, he had found several severe scratches on Dick's face, made apparently by nails, which he declared had been done in an up and down fight at Broad-green Fair. Also a severe raw scar on his left temple, as if hair had been pulled out.

At this stage of the proceedings, by order of the judge, the prisoner Dick was brought up. The lock of hair taken by Lord Mardall from the murdered lady's hand was compared with Dick's head. It matched exactly, although Dick's hair had been cut short and washed. Then a Mr. Monley gave evidence, that when he met the prisoner, on the night of the murder, immediately after he had left the cottage, there certainly was no blood on his face or dress. The landlord of the Moon Inn was called, and deposed, that he found the corn, placed before the prisoner's horse, unentertained and much stained with blood. On examining the horse's tongue, he saw that it had been half-bitten off in the fall the animal had suffered. No doubt the blood had dripped over the young Squire.

It was a bright moonlight night shining in the prisoner's face.

The judge summed up for an acquittal, and the jury gave a verdict of Not Guilty, without leaving the box.

A week after, Haymaking Dick made an attempt to break out of prison, in which he knocked out the brains of a turnkey with his irons. He was tried and condemned for this, and when hope of escape was gone, he called a favourite turnkey to him and said, "Bill, I killed the Frenchwoman. I knew she always had plenty of money and jewels, and I watched my opportunity to get 'em."

Thus ends the newspaper report. My uncle died of gout in his stomach on the day of the trial, and died almost insolvent. By Lord Mardall's influence I received an appointment from the East India Company, and afterwards a commission in their irregular service.

THE SCHOLAR'S STORY.

I PERCEIVE a general fear on the part of this pleasant company, that I am going to start into black-letter, and beguile the time by being as dry as ashes. No, there is no such fear, you can assure me? I am glad to hear it; but I thought there was.

At any rate, both to relieve your minds and to place myself beyond suspicion, I will say at once that my story is a ballad. It was taken down, as I am going to repeat it,

seventy-one years ago, by the mother of the person who communicated it to M. Villemarqué when he was making his collection of Breton Ballads. It is slightly confirmed by the chronicles and Ecclesiastical Acts of the time; but no more of them or you really will suspect me. It runs, according to my version, thus.

L.

Sole child of her house, a lovely maid,
In the lordly halls of Rohan played.

Played till thirteen, when her sire was bent
To see her wed; and she gave consent.

And many a lord of high degree
Came suing, her chosen knight to be;

But amongst them all there pleased her none
Save the noble Count Mathieu alone;

Lord of the Castle of Trougoli,
A princely knight of Italy.

To him so courteous, true, and brave,
Her heart the maiden freely gave.

Three years since the day they first were wed
In peace and in bliss away had sped,

When tidings came on the winds abroad
That all were to take the cross of God.

Then spake the Count like a noble knight:
"Aye first in birth should be first in fight!"

"And, since to this Paynim war I must,
Dear cousin, I leave thee here in trust.

"My wife and my child I leave to thee;
Guard them, good clerk, as thy life for me!"

Early next morn, from his castle gate,
As rode forth the knight in bannered state,

Down the marble steps, all full of fears,
The lady hied her, with morns and tears—

The loving, sweet lady, sobbing wild—
And, laid on her breast, her baby child.

She ran to her lord with breathless speed,
As backward he reined his fiery steed;

She caught and she clasped him round the knee;
She wept, and she prayed him piteously:

"Oh stay with me, stay! my lord, my love!
Go not, I beg, by the saints above;

"Leave me not here alone, I pray,
To weep on your baby's face away!"

The knight was touched with her sad despair,
And fondly gazed on her face so fair;

And stretched out his hand, and stooping low,
Raised her up straight to his saddle-bow;

And held her pressed to his bosom then,
And kissed her o'er and o'er agen.

"Come, dry these tears, my little Joan;
A single year, it will soon be flown!"

His baby dear in his arms he took,
And looked on him with a proud, fond look:

"My boy, when thou'rt a man," said he,
Wilt ride to the wars along with me?"

Then away he spurred across the plain,
And old and young they wept amain;

Both rich and poor, wept every one;
But that same clerk—ah! he wept none.

II.

The treacherous clerk, one morning-tide,
With artful speeches the lady plied :

"Lo ! ended now is that single year,
And ended too is the war, I hear ;

"But yet, thy lord to return to thee,
Would seem in no haste at all to be.

"Now, ask of your heart, my lady dear,
Is there ~~no~~ other might please it here ?

"Need wives still keep themselves unwed,
E'en though their husbands should not be dead ?"

"Silence ! thou wretched clerk !" cried she,
"Thy heart is filled full of sin, I see.

"When my lord returns, if I whisper him,
Thou know'st he 'll tear thee limb from limb !"

As soon as the clerk thus answered she
He stole to the kennel secretly.

He called to the hound so swift and true,
The hound that his lord loved best, he knew.

It came to his call—leapt up in play ;
One gush in the throat, and dead it lay.

As trickled the blood from out the throat,
He dipped in that red ink and wrote :

A letter he wrote, with a liar's heed,
And sent it straight to the camp with speed.

And these were the words the letter bore :
"Dear lord, your wife she is fretting sore ;

"Fretting and grieving, your wife so dear,
For a sad mischance befallen here.

"Chasing the doe on the mountain-side,
Thy beautiful greyhound burst and died."

The Count so guileless then answer made,
And thus to his faithless cousin said :

"Now, bid my own little wife, I pray,
To fret not for this mischance one day.

"My hound is dead—well ! money have I
Another, when I come back, to buy.

"Yet say she'd better not hunt agen,
For hunters are oft but wildish men."

III.

The miscreant clerk once more he came,
As she wept in her bower, to the peerless dame.

"O lady, with weeping night and day,
Your beauty is fading fast away."

"And what care I though it fading be,
When my own dear lord comes not to me !"

"Thy own dear lord has, I fancy, wed
Another ere this, or else he's dead.

"The Moorish maidens though dark are fair,
And gold in plenty have got to spare ;

"The Moorish chiefs on the battle plain
Thousands of valiant as he have slain.

"If he's wed another—Oh curse, not fret ;
Or, if he's dead—why, straight forget !"

"If he's wed another I 'll die," she said ;
"And I 'll die likewise, if he be dead !"

"In case one chances to lose the key,
No need for burning the box, I see.

"Twere wiser, if I might speak my mind,
"A new and a better key, to find."

"Now hold, thou wretched clerk, thy tongue,
'Tis foul with lewdness—more rotten than dung."

As soon as the clerk thus answered she,
He stole to the stable secretly.

He looked at the lord's own favourite steed,
Unmatched for beauty, for strength and speed

White as an egg, and more smooth to touch,
Light as a bird, and for fire none such ;

On nought had she fed, since she was born,
Save fine chopped heath and the best of corn.

Awhile the bonny white mare he eyed,
Then struck his dirk in her velvet side ;

And when the bonny white mare lay dead,
Again to the Count he wrote and said :

"Of a fresh mischance I now send word,
But let it not vex thee much, dear lord ;

"Hasting back from a revel last night,
My lady rode on thy favourite white—

"So hotly rode, it stumbled and fell,
And broke both legs, as I grieve to tell."

The Count then answered, "Ah ! woe is me
My bonny white mare no more to see ?

"My mare she has killed ; my hound killed too
Good cousin, now give her counsel true.

"Yet scold her not either ; but, say from me,
To no more revels at night must she.

"Not horses' legs alone, I fear,
But wisely vows may be broken there !"

IV.

The clerk a few days let pass, and then
Back to the charge returned agen.

"Lady, now yield, or you die !" said he ;
"Choose which you will—choose speedily !"

"Ten thousand deaths would I rather die,
Than shame upon me my God should cry !"

The clerk, when he saw he nought might gain,
No more could his smothered wrath contain ;

So soon as those words had left her tongue,
His dagger right at her head he flung.

But swift her white angel, hovering nigh,
Turned it aside as it flashed her by.

The lady straight to her chamber flew,
And bolt and bar behind her drew.

The clerk his dagger snatched up and shook,
And grinned with an angry ban-dog's look.

Down the broad stairs in his rage came he,
Two steps at a time, two steps and three.

Then on to the nurse's room he crept,
Where softly the winsome baby slept—

Softly, and sweetly, and all alone ;
One arm from the silken cradle thrown—

One little round arm just o'er it laid,
Folded the other beneath his head ;

His little white breast—ah ! hush ! be still !
Poor mother, go now and weep your fill !

Away to his room the clerk then sped,
And wrote a letter in black and red ;

In haste, post haste, to the Count wrote he :
"There is need, dear lord, sore need of thee !"

"Oh speed now, speed, to thy castle back,
For all runs riot, and runs to wreck.
"Thy hound is killed, and thy mare is killed,
But not for these with such grief I'm killed.
"Nor is it for these thou now wilt care;
Thy darling is dead! thy son, thy heir!
"The sow she seized and devoured him all,
While thy wife was dancing at the ball;
"Dancing there with the miller gay,
Her young gallant, as the people say."

V.

That letter came to the valiant knight,
Hastening home from the Paynim fight;
With trumpet sound, from that Eastern strand
Hastening home to his own dear land.
So soon as he read the missive through,
Fearful to see his anger grew.
The scroll in his mailed hand he took,
And crumpled it up with furious look;
To bits with his teeth he tore the sheet,
And spat them out at his horse's feet.
"Now quick to Brittany, quick, my men,
The homes that you love to see again!
"Thou loitering squire! ride yet more quick,
Or my lance shall teach thee how to prick!"
But when he stood at his castle gate,
Three lordly blows he struck it straight;
Three angry blows he struck thereon,
Which made them treble every one.
The clerk he heard, and down he hied,
And opened at once the portal wide.
"Oh cursed consin, that this should be!
Did I not trust my wife to thee?"
His spear down the traitor's throat he drove,
Till out at his back the red point drove.
Then up he rushed to the bridal bower,
Where drooped his lady like some pale flower.
And ere she could speak a single word,
She fell at his feet beneath his sword.

VI.

"O holy priest! now tell to me
What didst thou up at the castle see?"
"I saw a grief and a terror more
Than ever I saw on earth before.
"I saw a martyr give up her breath,
And her slayer sorrowing e'en to death."
"O holy priest! now tell to me
What didst thou down at the crossway see?"
"I saw a corpse that all mangled lay,
And the dogs and ravens made their prey."
"Oh holy priest! now tell to me
What didst thou next in the churchyard see?"
"By a new-made grave, in soft moonlight,
I saw a fair lady clothed in white;
"Nursing a little child on her knee—
A dark red wound on his breast had he,
"A noble hound lay couched at her right,
A steed at her left of bonniest white;

"The first a gash in its throat had wide,
And this as deep a stab in its side.
"They raised their heads to the lady's knee,
And they licked her soft hands tenderly.
"She gently patted their necks, the while
Smiling, though silly, a fair sweet smile.
"The child, as it fain its love would speak,
Caressed and fondled its mother's cheek.
"But down went the moon then silently,
And my eyes no more their forms could see;
"But I heard a bird from out the skies
Warbling a song of Paradise!"

NOBODY'S STORY.

He lived on the bank of a mighty river,
broad and deep, which was always silently
rolling on to a vast undiscovered ocean. It
had rolled on, ever since the world began.
It had changed its course sometimes, and
turned into new channels, leaving its old
ways dry and barren; but it had ever been
upon the flow, and ever was to flow until
Time should be no more. Against its strong,
unfathomable stream, nothing made head.
No living creature, no flower, no leaf, no par-
ticle of animate or inanimate existence, ever
strayed back from the undiscovered ocean.
The tide of the river set resistlessly towards
it; and the tide never stopped, any more than
the earth stops in its circling round the sun.
He lived in a busy place, and he worked
very hard to live. He had no hope of ever
being rich enough to live a month without
hard work, but he was quite content, God
knows, to labour with a cheerful will. He
was one of an immense family, all of whose
sons and daughters gained their daily bread
by daily work, prolonged from their rising
up betimes until their lying down at night.
Beyond this destiny he had no prospect, and
he sought none.

There was over-much drumming, trum-
peting, and speechmaking, in the neighbour-
hood where he dwelt; but he had nothing to
do with that. Such clash and uproar came
from the Bigwig family, at the unaccount-
able proceedings of which race, he marvelled
much. They set up the strangest statues, in
iron, marble, bronze, and brass, before his
door; and darkened his house with the legs
and tails of uncouth images of horses. He
wondered what it all meant, smiled in a
rough good-humoured way he had, and kept
at his hard work.

The Bigwig family (composed of all the
stateliest people thereabouts, and all the
noisiest) had undertaken to save him the
trouble of thinking for himself, and to manage
him and his affairs. "Why truty," said he.
"I have little time upon my hands; and it
you will be so good as to take care of me, in
return for the money I pay over"—for the
Bigwig family were not above his money—"I
shall be relieved and much obliged, consider-

ing that you know best." Hence the drumming, trumpeting, and speechmaking, and the ugly images of horses which he was expected to fall down and worship.

"I don't understand all this," said he, rubbing his furrowed brow confusedly. "But it has a meaning, maybe, if I could find it out."

"It means," returned the Bigwig family, suspecting something of what he said, "honour and glory in the highest, to the highest merit."

"Oh!" said he. And he was glad to hear that.

But, when he looked among the images in iron, marble, bronze, and brass, he failed to find a rather meritorious countryman of his, once the son of a Warwickshire wool-dealer, or any single countryman whomsoever of that kind. He could find none of the men whose knowledge had rescued him and his children from terrific and disfiguring disease, whose boldness had raised his forefathers from the condition of serfs, whose wise fancy had opened a new and high existence to the humblest, whose skill had filled the working man's world with accumulated wonders. Whereas, he did find others whom he knew no good of, and even others whom he knew much ill of.

"Humph!" said he. "I don't quite understand it."

So, he went home, and sat down by his fire-side to get it out of his mind.

Now, his fire-side was a bare one, all hemmed in by blackened streets; but it was a precious place to him. The hands of his wife were hardened with toil, and she was old before her time; but she was dear to him. His children, stunted in their growth, bore traces of unwholesome nurture; but they had beauty in his sight. Above all other things, it was an earnest desire of this man's soul that his children should be taught. "If I am sometimes misled," said he, "for want of knowledge, at least let them know better, and avoid my mistakes. If it is hard to me to reap the harvest of pleasure and instruction that is stored in books, let it be easier to them."

But, the Bigwig family broke out into violent family quarrels concerning what it was lawful to teach to this man's children. Some of the family insisted on such a thing being primary and indispensable above all other things; and others of the family insisted on such another thing being primary and indispensable above all other things; and the Bigwig family, rent into factions, wrote pamphlets, held convocations, delivered charges, orations, and all varieties of discourses; impounded one another in courts lay and courts Ecclesiastical; threw dirt, exchanged pummelings, and fell together by the ears in unintelligible animosity. Meanwhile, this man, in his short evening snatches at his fire-side, saw the demon Ignor-

ance arise there, and take his children to itself. He saw his daughter perverted into a heavy slatternly drudge; he saw his son groping down the ways of low sensuality, brutality and crime; he saw the dawning light of intelligence in the eyes of his babies so changing into cunning and suspicion, that he could have rather wished them idiots.

"I don't understand this any the better," said he; "but I think it cannot be right. Nay, by the clouded Heaven above me, I protest against this as my wrong!"

Becoming peaceable again (for his passion was usually short-lived, and his nature kind), he looked about him on his Sundays and holidays, and he saw how much monotony and weariness there was, and thence how drunkenness arose with all its train of ruin. Then he appealed to the Bigwig family, and said, "We are a labouring people, and I have a glimmering suspicion in me that labouring people of whatever condition were made—by a higher intelligence than yours, as I poorly understand it—to be in need of mental refreshment and recreation. See what we fall into, when we rest without it. Come! Amuse me harmlessly, show me something, give me an escape!"

But, here the Bigwig family fell into a state of uproar absolutely deafening. When some few voices were faintly heard, proposing to show him the wonders of the world, the greatness of creation, the mighty changes of time, the workings of nature and the beauties of art—to show him these things, that is to say, at any period of his life when he could look upon them—there arose among the Bigwigs such roaring and raving, such pulpitting and petitioning, such mauling and memorialising, such name-calling and dirt-throwing, such a shrill wind of parliamentary questioning and feeble replying—where "I dare not" waited on "I would"—that the poor fellow stood aghast, staring wildly around.

"Have I provoked all this," said he, with his hands to his affrighted ears, "by what was meant to be an innocent request, plainly arising out of my familiar experience, and the common knowledge of all men who choose to open their eyes? I don't understand, and I am not understood. What is to come of such a state of things?"

He was bending over his work, often asking himself the question, when the news began to spread that a pestilence had appeared among the labourers, and was slaying them by thousands. Going forth to look about him, he soon found this to be true. The dying and the dead were mingled in the close and tainted houses among which his life was passed. New poison was distilled into the always murky, always sickening air. The robust and the weak, old age and infancy, the father and the mother, all were stricken down alike.

What means of flight had he? He re-

remained there, where he was, and saw those who were dearest to him die. A kind preacher came to him, and would have said some prayers to soften his heart in his gloom, but he replied :

"O what avails it, missionary, to come to me, a man condemned to residence in this fustid place, where every sense bestowed upon me for my delight becomes a torment, and where every minute of my numbered days is new mire added to the heap under which I lie oppressed ! But, give me my first glimpse of Heaven, through a little of its light and air ; give me pure water ; help me to be clean ; lighten this heavy atmosphere and heavy life, in which our spirits sink, and we become the indifferent and callous creatures you too often see us ; gently and kindly take the bodies of those who die among us, out of the small room where we grow to be so familiar with the awful change that even its sanctity is lost to us ; and, Teacher, then I will hear—none know better than you, how willingly—of Him whose thoughts were so much with the poor, and who had compassion for all human sorrow !"

He was at his work again, solitary and sad, when his Master came and stood near to him dressed in black. He, also, had suffered heavily. His young wife, his beautiful and good young wife, was dead ; so, too, his only child.

"Master, 'tis hard to bear—I know it—but be comforted. I would give you comfort, if I could."

The Master thanked him from his heart, but, said he, "O you labouring men ! The calamity began among you. If you had but lived more healthily and decently, I should not be the widowed and bereft mourner that I am this day."

"Master," returned the other, shaking his head, "I have begun to understand a little that most calamities will come from us, as this one did, and that none will stop at our poor doors, until we are united with that great squabbling family yonder, to do the things that are right. We cannot live healthily and decently, unless they who undertook to manage us provide the means. We cannot be instructed, unless they will teach us ; we cannot be rationally amused, unless they will amuse us ; we cannot but have some false gods of our own, while they set up so many of theirs in all the public places. The evil consequences of imperfect instruction, the evil consequences of pernicious neglect, the evil consequences of unnatural restraint and the denial of humanizing enjoyments, will all come from us, and none of them will stop with us. They will spread far and wide. They always do ; they always have done—just like the pestilence. I understand so much, I think, at last."

But the Master said again, "O you labouring men ! How seldom do we ever hear of you, except in connection with some trouble !"

"Master," he replied, "I am Nobody, and little likely to be heard of, (nor yet much wanted to be heard of, perhaps) except when there is some trouble. But it never begins with me, and it never can end with me. As sure as Death, it comes down to me, and it goes up from me."

There was so much reason in what he said, that the Bigwig family, getting wind of it, and being horribly frightened by the late desolation, resolved to unite with him to do the things that were right—at all events, so far as the said things were associated with the direct prevention, humanly speaking, of another pestilence. But, as their fear wore off, which it soon began to do, they resumed their falling out among themselves, and did nothing. Consequently the scourge appeared again—low down as before—and spread avengingly upward as before, and carried off vast numbers of the brawlers. But not a man among them ever admitted, if in the least degree he ever perceived, that he had anything to do with it.

So Nobody lived and died in the old, old way ; and this, in the main, is the whole of Nobody's story.

Had he no name, you ask ? Perhaps it was Legion. It matters little what his name was. Let us call him Legion.

If you were ever in the Belgian villages near the field of Waterloo, you will have seen, in some quiet little church, a monument erected by faithful companions in arms to the memory of Colonel A, Major B, Captains C D and E, Lieutenants F and G, Ensigns H I and J, seven non-commissioned officers, and one hundred and thirty rank and file, who fell in the discharge of their duty on the memorable day. The story of Nobody is the story of the rank and file of the earth. They bear their share of the battle ; they have their part in the victory ; they fall ; they leave no name but in the mass. The march of the proudest of us, leads to the dusty way by which they go. O ! Let us think of them this year at the Christmas fire, and not forget them when it is burnt out.

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THE FIRST.

STRICTLY speaking, there were only six Poor Travellers; but, being a Traveller myself, though an idle one, and being withal as poor as I hope to be, I brought the number up to seven. This word of explanation is due at once, for what says the inscription over the quaint old door?

RICHARD WATTS, Esq.
by his Will, dated 22 Aug. 1579,
founded this Charity
for Six poor Travellers,
whonotbeing ROGUES, or PROCTORS,
May receive gratis for one Night,
Lodging, Entertainment,
and Four-pence each.

It was in the ancient little city of Rochester in Kent, of all the good days in the year upon a Christmas Eve, that I stood reading this inscription over the quaint old door in question. I had been wandering about the neighbouring Cathedral, and had seen the tomb of Richard Watts, with the effigy of worthy Master Richard starting out of it like a ship's figure-head; and I had felt that I could do no less, as I gave the Verger his fee, than inquire the way to Watt's Charity. The way being very short and very plain, I had come prosperously to the inscription and the quaint old door.

"Now," said I to myself, as I looked at the knocker, "I know I am not a Proctor; I wonder whether I am a Rogue!"

Upon the whole, though Conscience reproduced two or three pretty faces which might have had smaller attraction for a moral Goliath than they had had for me, who am but a Tom Thumb in that way, I came to the conclusion that I was not a Rogue. So, beginning to regard the establishment as in some sort

my property, bequeathed to me and divers co-legatees, share and share alike, by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts, I stepped backward into the road to survey my inheritance.

I found it to be a clean white house, of a staid and venerable air, with the quaint old door already three times mentioned (an arched door), choice little long low lattice-windows, and a roof of three gables. The silent High Street of Rochester is full of gables, with old beams and timbers carved into strange faces. It is oddly garnished with a queer old clock that projects over the pavement out of a grave red brick building, as if Time carried on business there, and hung out his sign. Sooth to say, he did an active stroke of work in Rochester, in the old days of the Romans, and the Saxons, and the Normans, and down to the times of King John, when the rugged castle—I will not undertake to say how many hundreds of years old then—was abandoned to the centuries of weather which have so defaced the dark apertures in its walls, that the ruin looks as if the rooks and daws had picked its eyes out.

I was very well pleased, both with my property and its situation. While I was yet surveying it with growing content, I espied at one of the upper lattices which stood open, a decent body, of a wholesome matronly appearance, whose eyes I caught inquiringly addressed to mine. They said so plainly, "Do you wish to see the house?" that I answered aloud, "Yes, if you please." And within a minute the old door opened, and I bent my head, and went down two steps into the entry.

"This," said the matronly presence, ushering me into a low room on the right, "is where the Travellers sit by the fire, and cook what bits of suppers they buy with their fourpences."

"Oh! Then they have no Entertainment?" said I. For, the inscription over the outer door was still running in my head, and I

was mentally repeating in a kind of tune, "Lodging, entertainment, and fourpence each."

"They have a fire provided for 'em," returned the matron: a mighty civil person, not, as I could make out, overpaid: "and these cooking utensils. And this what's painted on a board, is the rules for their behaviour. They have their fourpences when they get their tickets from the steward over the way—for I don't admit 'em myself, they must get their tickets first—and sometimes one buys a rasher of bacon, and another a herring, and another a pound of potatoes, or what not. Sometimes, two or three of 'em will club their fourpences together, and make a supper that way. But, not much of anything is to be got for fourpence, at present, when provisions is so dear."

"True indeed," I remarked. I had been looking about the room, admiring its snug fireside at the upper end, its glimpse of the street through the low mullioned window, and its beams overhead. "It is very comfortable," said I.

"Ill-convenient," observed the matronly presence.

I liked to hear her say so; for, it showed a commendable anxiety to execute in no niggardly spirit the intentions of Master Richard Watts. But, the room was really so well adapted to its purpose that I protested, quite enthusiastically, against her disparagement.

"Nay, ma'am," said I, "I am sure it is warm in winter and cool in summer. It has a look of homely welcome and soothing rest. It has a remarkably cosy fireside, the very blink of which, gleaming out into the street upon a winter night, is enough to warm all Rochester's heart. And as to the convenience of the six Poor Travellers—"

"I don't mean them," returned the presence. "I speak of its being an ill-convenience to myself and my daughter having no other room to sit in of a night."

This was true enough, but there was another quaint room of corresponding dimensions on the opposite side of the entry: so, I stepped across to it, through the open doors of both rooms, and asked what this chamber was for?

"This" returned the presence, "is the Board Room. Where the gentlemen meet when they come here."

Let me see. I had counted from the street six upper windows besides these on the ground-story. Making a perplexed calculation in my mind, I rejoined, "Then the six Poor Travellers sleep upstairs?"

My new friend shook her head. "They sleep," she answered, "in two little outer galleries at the back, where their beds has always been, ever since the Charity was founded. It being so very ill-convenient to me as things is at present, the gentlemen are going

to take off a bit of the back yard and make a slip of a room for 'em there, to sit in before they go to bed."

"And then the six Poor Travellers," said I, "will be entirely out of the house?"

"Entirely out of the house," assented the presence, comfortably smoothing her hands. "Which is considered much better for all parties, and much more convenient."

I had been a little startled, in the cathedral, by the emphasis with which the effigy of Master Richard Watts was bursting out of his tomb; but, I began to think, now, that it might be expected to come across the High Street some stormy night, and make a disturbance here.

Howbeit, I kept my thoughts to myself, and accompanied the presence to the little galleries at the back. I found them, on a tiny scale, like the galleries in old inn yards; and they were very clean. While I was looking at them, the matron gave me to understand that the prescribed number of Poor Travellers were forthcoming every night from year's end to year's end; and that the beds were always occupied. My questions upon this, and her replies, brought us back to the Board Room so essential to the dignity of "the gentlemen," where she showed me the printed accounts of the Charity hanging up by the window. From them, I gathered that the greater part of the property bequeathed by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts for the maintenance of this foundation, was, at the period of his death, mere marsh-land; but that, in course of time, it had been reclaimed and built upon, and was very considerably increased in value. I found, too, that about a thirtieth part of the annual revenue was now expended on the purposes commemorated in the inscription over the door: the rest being handsomely laid out in Chapcery, law expenses, collectorship, receivership, poundage, and other appendages of management, highly complimentary to the importance of the six Poor Travellers. In short, I made the not entirely new discovery that it may be said of an establishment like this, in dear Old England, as of the fat oyster in the American story, that it takes a good many men to swallow it whole.

"And pray, ma'am," said I, sensible that the blankness of my face began to brighten as a thought occurred to me, "could one see these Travellers?"

Well! she returned dubiously; no! "Not to-night, for instance?" said I. Well! she returned more positively; no. Nobody ever asked to see them, and nobody ever did see them.

As I am not easily baulked in a design when I am set upon it, I urged to the good lady that this was Christmas Eve; that Christmas comes but once a year—which is unhappily too true, for when it begins to stay with us the whole year round, we shall make this earth a very different place; that

I was possessed by the desire to treat the Travellers to a supper and a temperate glass of hot Wassail; that the voice of Fame had been heard in the land, declaring my ability to make hot Wassail; that if I were permitted to hold the feast, I should be found conformable to reason, sobriety, and good hours; in a word, that I could be merry and wise myself, and had been even known at a pinch to keep others so, although I was decorated with no badge or medal, and was not a Brother, Orator, Apostle, Saint, or Prophet of any denomination whatever. In the end, I prevailed, to my great joy. It was settled that at nine o'clock that night, a Turkey and a piece of Roast Beef should smoke upon the board; and that I, faint and unworthy minister for Once of Master Richard Watts, should preside as the Christmas-supper host of the six Poor Travellers.

I went back to my inn, to give the necessary directions for the Turkey and Roast Beef, and, during the remainder of the day, could settle to nothing for thinking of the Poor Travellers. When the wind blew hard against the windows—it was a cold day, with dark gusts of sleet alternating with periods of wild brightness, as if the year were dying fitfully—I pictured them advancing towards their resting-place along various cold roads, and felt delighted to think how little they foresaw the supper that awaited them. I painted their portraits in my mind, and indulged in little heightening touches. I made them footsore; I made them weary; I made them carry packs and bundles; I made them stop by finger-posts and mile-stones, leaning on their bent sticks and looking wistfully at what was written there; I made them lose their way, and filled their five wits with apprehensions of lying out all night, and being frozen to death. I took up my hat and went out, climbed to the top of the Old Castle, and looked over the windy hills that slope down to the Midway: almost believing that I could descry some of my Travellers in the distance. After it fell dark, and the Cathedral bell was heard in the invisible steeple—quite a bower of frosty rime when I had last seen it—striking five, six, seven; I became so full of my Travellers that I could eat no dinner, and felt constrained to watch them still, in the red coals of my fire. They were all arrived by this time, I thought, had got their tickets, and were gone in.—There, my pleasure was dashed by the reflection that probably some Travellers had come too late and were shut out.

After the Cathedral bell had struck eight, I could smell a delicious savour of Turkey and Roast Beef rising to the window of my adjoining bed-room, which looked down into the inn yard, just where the lights of the kitchen reddened a massive fragment of the Castle Wall. It was high time to make the Wassail now; therefore, I had up the materials (which, together with their proportions and combi-

nations, I must decline to impart, as the only secret of my own I was ever known to keep), and made a glorious jorum. Not in a bowl; for, a bowl anywhere but on a shelf, is a low superstition fraught with cooling and slopping; but, in a brown earthenware pitcher, tenderly suffocated when full, with a coarse cloth. It being now upon the stroke of nine, I set out for Watts's Charity, carrying my brown beauty in my arms. I would trust Ben the waiter with untold gold; but, there are strings in the human heart which must never be sounded by another, and drinks that I make myself are those strings in mine.

The Travellers were all assembled, the cloth was laid, and Ben had brought a great billet of wood, and had laid it artfully on the top of the fire, so that a touch or two of the poker after supper should make a roaring blaze. Having deposited my brown beauty in a red nook of the hearth inside the fender, where she soon began to sing like an ethereal cricket, diffusing at the same time odours as of ripe vineyards, spice forests, and orange groves—I say, having stationed my beauty in a place of security and improvement, I introduced myself to my guests by shaking hands all round, and giving them a hearty welcome.

I found the party to be thus composed. Firstly, myself. Secondly, a very decent man indeed, with his right arm in a sling; who had a certain clean, agreeable smell of wood about him, from which I judged him to have something to do with shipbuilding. Thirdly, a little sailor-boy, a mere child, with a profusion of rich dark brown hair, and deep womanly-looking eyes. Fourthly, a shabby-genteel personage in a threadbare black suit, and apparently in very bad circumstances, with a dry suspicious look; the absent buttons on his waistcoat eked out with red tape; and a bundle of extraordinarily tattered papers sticking out of an inner breast-pocket. Fifthly, a foreigner by birth, but an Englishman in speech, who carried his pipe in the band of his hat, and lost no time in telling me, in an easy, simple, engaging way, that he was a watchmaker from Geneva, and travelled all about the continent, mostly on foot, working as a journeyman, and seeing new countries—possibly (I thought) also smuggling a watch or so, now and then. Sixthly, a little widow, who had been very pretty and was still very young, but whose beauty had been wrecked in some great misfortune, and whose manner was remarkably timid, scared, and solitary. Seventhly and lastly, a Traveller of a kind familiar to my boyhood, but now almost obsolete: a Book-Fellar: who had a quantity of Pamphlets and Numbers with him, and who presently boasted that he could repeat more verses in an evening, than he could sell in a twelvemonth.

All these I have mentioned, in the order in which they sat at table. I presided, and the matronly presence, faced us. We were not

long in taking our places, for the supper had arrived with me, in the following procession.

Myself with the pitcher.

Ben with Beer.

Inattentive Boy with hot plates. Inattentive Boy with hot plates.

THE TURKEY.

Female carrying sauces to be heated on the spot.

THE BEEF.

Man with Tray on his head, containing Vegetables and Sundries.

Volunteer hostler from Hotel, grinning,
And rendering no assistance.

As we passed along the High-street, Comet-like, we left a long tail of fragrance behind us which caused the public to stop, sniffing in wonder. We had previously left at the corner of the inn-yard, a wall-eyed young man connected with the Fly department, and well accustomed to the sound of a railway whistle which Ben always carries in his pocket: whose instructions were, so soon as he should hear the whistle blown, to dash into the kitchen, seize the hot plum-pudding and mince pies, and speed with them to Watts's Charity: where they would be received (he was further instructed) by the sauce-female, who would be provided with brandy in a blue state of combustion.

All these arrangements were executed in the most exact and punctual manner. I never saw a finer turkey, finer beef, or greater prodigality of sauce and gravy; and my Travellers did wonderful justice to everything set before them. It made my heart rejoice, to observe how their wind-and-frost hardened faces, softened in the clatter of plates and knives and forks, and mellowed in the fire and supper heat. While their hats and caps, and wrappers, hanging up; a few small bundles on the ground in a corner; and, in another corner, three or four old walking sticks, worn down at the end to mere fringe; linked this snug interior with the bleak outside in a golden chain.

When supper was done, and my brown beauty had been elevated on the table, there was a general requisition to me, to "take the corner;" which suggested to me, comfortably enough, how much my friends here made of a fire—for when had I ever thought so highly of the corner, since the days when I connected it with Jack Horner? However, as I declined, Ben, whose touch on all convivial instruments is perfect, drew the table apart, and instructing my Travellers to open right and left on either side of me, and form round the fire, closed up the centre with myself and my chair, and preserved the order we had kept at table. He had already, in a tranquil manner, boxed the ears of the inattentive boys until they had been by imperceptible degrees boxed out of the room; and he now rapidly skirmished the sauce-female into the High Street, disappeared, and softly closed the door.

This was the time for bringing the poker to bear on the billet of wood. I tapped it three times, like an enchanted talisman, and a brilliant host of merry-makers burst out of it, and sported off by the chimney—rushing up the middle in a fiery country dance, and never coming down again. Meanwhile, by their sparkling light which threw our lamp into the shade, I filled the glasses, and gave my Travellers, CHRISTMAS!—CHRISTMAS EVE, my friends, when the Shepherds, who were Poor Travellers too in their way, heard the Angels sing, "On earth, peace. Goodwill towards men!"

I don't know who was the first among us to think that we ought to take hands as we sat, in deference to the toast, or whether any one of us anticipated the others, but at any rate we all did it. We then drank to the memory of the good Master Richard Watts. And I wish his Ghost may never have had worse usage under that roof, than it had from us!

It was the witching time for Story-telling. "Our whole life, Travellers," said I, "is a story more or less intelligible—generally less; but, we shall read it by a clearer light when it is ended. I for one, am so divided this night between fact and fiction, that I scarce know which is which. Shall we beguile the time by telling stories, in our order as we sit here?"

They all answered, Yes, provided I would begin. I had little to tell them, but I was bound by my own proposal. Therefore, after looking for a while at the spiral column of smoke wreathing up from my brown beauty, through which I could have almost sworn I saw the effigy of Master Richard Watts less startled than usual; I fired away.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, a relative of mine came limping down, on foot, to this town of Chatham. I call it this town, because if anybody present knows to a nicety where Rochester ends and Chatham begins, it is more than I do. He was a poor traveller, with not a farthing in his pocket. He sat by the fire in this very room, and he slept one night in a bed that will be occupied to-night by some one here.

My relative came down to Chatham, to enlist in a cavalry regiment, if a cavalry regiment would have him; if not, to take King George's shilling from any corporal or sergeant who would put a bunch of ribbons in his hat. His object was, to get shot; but, he thought he might as well ride to death as be at the trouble of walking.

My relative's Christian name was Richard, but he was better known as Dick. He dropped his own surname on the road down, and took up that of Doubledick. He was passed as Richard Doubledick; age

twenty-two; height, five foot ten; native place, Exmouth; which he had never been near in his life. There was no cavalry in Chatham when he limped over the bridge here with half a shoe to his dusty foot, so he enlisted into a regiment of the line, and was glad to get drunk and forget all about it.

You are to know that this relative of mine had gone wrong and run wild. His heart was in the right place, but it was sealed up. He had been betrothed to a good and beautiful girl whom he had loved better than she—or perhaps even he—believed; but, in an evil hour, he had given her cause to say to him, solemnly, "Richard, I will never marry any other man. I will live single for your sake, but Mary Marshall's lips;" her name was Mary Marshall; "never address another word to you on earth. Go, Richard! Heaven forgive you!" This finished him. This brought him down to Chatham. This made him Private Richard Doubledick, with a determination to be shot.

There was not a more dissipated and reckless soldier in Chatham barracks, in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, than Private Richard Doubledick. He associated with the dregs of every regiment, he was as seldom sober as he could be, and was constantly under punishment. It became clear to the whole barracks, that Private Richard Doubledick would very soon be flogged.

Now, the Captain of Richard Doubledick's company was a young gentleman not above five years his senior, whose eyes had an expression in them which affected Private Richard Doubledick in a very remarkable way. They were bright, handsome, dark eyes—what are called laughing eyes generally, and, when serious, rather steady than severe—but, they were the only eyes now left in his narrowed world that Private Richard Doubledick could not stand. Unabashed by evil report and punishment, defiant of everything else and everybody else, he had but to know that those eyes looked at him for a moment, and he felt ashamed. He could not so much as salute Captain Taunton in the street, like any other officer. He was reproached and confused—troubled by the mere possibility of the captain's looking at him. In his worst moments he would rather turn back and go any distance out of his way, than encounter those two handsome, dark, bright eyes.

One day, when Private Richard Doubledick came out of the Black hole, where he had been passing the last eight-and-forty hours, and in which retreat he spent a good deal of his time, he was ordered to betake himself to Captain Taunton's quarters. In the stale and squalid state of a man just out of the Black hole, he had less fancy than ever for being seen by the captain; but, he was not so mad yet as to disobey orders, and consequently went up to the terrace overlooking the parade-ground, where the officers' quarters

were: twisting and breaking in his hands as he went along, a bit of the straw that had formed the decorative furniture of the Black hole.

"Come in!" cried the Captain, when he knocked with his knuckles at the door. Private Richard Doubledick pulled off his cap, took a stride forward, and felt very conscious that he stood in the light of the dark bright eyes.

There was a silent pause. Private Richard Doubledick had put the straw in his mouth, and was gradually doubling it up into his windpipe and choking himself.

"Doubledick," said the Captain, "Do you know where you are going to?"

"To the Devil, sir?" faltered Doubledick.

"Yes," returned the Captain. "And very fast."

Private Richard Doubledick turned the straw of the Black hole in his mouth, and made a miserable salute of acquiescence.

"Doubledick," said the Captain, "since I entered his Majesty's service, a boy of seventeen, I have been pained to see many men of promise going that road; but, I have never been so pained to see a man determined to make the shameful journey, as I have been, ever since you joined the regiment, to see you."

Private Richard Doubledick began to find a film stealing over the floor at which he looked; also to find the legs of the Captain's breakfast-table turning crooked, as if he saw them through water.

"I am only a common soldier, sir," said he. "It signifies very little what such a poor brute comes to."

"You are a man," returned the Captain with grave indignation, "of education and superior advantages; and if you say that, meaning what you say, you have sunk lower than I had believed. How low that must be, I leave you to consider: knowing what I know of your disgrace, and seeing what I see."

"I hope to get shot soon, sir," said Private Richard Doubledick; "and then the regiment, and the world together, will be rid of me."

The legs of the table were becoming very crooked. Doubledick, looking up to steady his vision, met the eyes that had so strong an influence over him. He put his hand before his own eyes, and the breast of his disgrace-jacket swelled as if it would fly asunder.

"I would rather," said the young Captain, "see this in you, Doubledick, than I would see five thousand guineas counted out upon this table for a gift to my good mother. Have you a mother?"

"I am thankful to say she is dead, sir."

"If your praises," returned the Captain, "were sounded from mouth to mouth through the whole regiment, through the whole army, through the whole country, you would wish

she had lived, to any with pride and joy, 'He is my son!'

"Spare me, sir," said Doubledick. "She would never have heard any good of me. She would never have had any pride and joy in owning herself my mother. Love and compassion she might have had, and would have always had, I know; but not— Spare me, sir! I am a broken wretch, quite at your mercy!" And he turned his face to the wall, and stretched out his imploring hand.

"My friend—" began the captain.

"God bless you, sir!" sobbed Private Richard Doubledick.

"You are at the crisis of your fate. Hold your course unchanged, a little longer, and you know what must happen. I know even better than you can imagine, that after that has happened, you are lost. No man who could shed those tears, could bear those marks."

"I fully believe it, sir," in a low, shivering voice, said Private Richard Doubledick.

"But a man in any station can do his duty," said the young Captain, "and, in doing it, can earn his own respect, even if his case should be so very unfortunate and so very rare, that he can earn no other man's. A common soldier, poor brute though you called him just now, has this advantage in the stormy times we live in, that he always does his duty before a host of sympathising witnesses. Do you doubt that he may so do it as to be extolled through a whole regiment, through a whole army, through a whole country? Turn while you may yet retrieve the past, and try."

"I will! I ask for only one witness, sir," cried Richard, with a bursting heart.

"I understand you. I will be a watchful and a faithful one."

I have heard from Private Richard Doubledick's own lips, that he dropped down upon his knee, kissed that officer's hand, arose, and went out of the light of the dark bright eyes, an altered man.

In that year, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, the French were in Egypt, in Italy, in Germany, where not? Napoleon Buonaparte had likewise begun to stir against us in India, and most men could read the signs of the great troubles that were coming on. In the very next year, when we formed an alliance with Austria against him, Captain Taunton's regiment was on service in India. And there was not a finer non-commissioned officer in it—no, nor in the whole line—than Corporal Richard Doubledick.

In eighteen hundred and one, the Indian army were on the coast of Egypt. Next year was the year of the proclamation of the short peace, and they were recalled. It had then become well known to thousands of men, that wherever Captain Taunton with the dark bright eyes, led, there, close to him, ever at his side, firm as a rock, true as the sun, and brave as Mars, would be certain to be found,

while life beat in their hearts, that famous soldier, Sergeant Richard Doubledick.

Eighteen hundred and five, besides being the great year of Trafalgar, was a year of hard fighting in India. That year saw such wonders done by a Sergeant-Major, who cut his way single-handed through a solid mass of men, recovered the colours of his regiment which had been seized from the hand of a poor boy shot through the heart, and rescued his wounded captain, who was down, and in a very jungle of horses' hoofs and sabres—saw such wonders done, I say, by this brave Sergeant-Major, that he was specially made the bearer of the colours he had won; and Ensign Richard Doubledick had risen from the ranks.

Sorely cut up in every battle, but always reinforced by the bravest of men—for, the fame of following the old colours, shot through and through, which Ensign Richard Doubledick had saved, inspired all breasts—this regiment fought its way through the Peninsular war, up to the investment of Badajos in eighteen hundred and twelve. Again and again it had been cheered through the British ranks until the tears had sprung into men's eyes at the mere hearing of the mighty British voice so exultant in their valour; and there was not a drummer-boy but knew the legend, that wherever the two friends, Major Taunton with the dark bright eyes, and Ensign Richard Doubledick who was devoted to him, were seen to go, there the boldest spirits in the English army became wild to follow.

One day, at Badajos—not in the great storming, but in repelling a hot sally of the besieged upon our men at work in the trenches, who had given way, the two officers found themselves hurrying forward, face to face, against a party of French infantry who made a stand. There was an officer at their head, encouraging his men—a courageous, handsome, gallant officer of five and thirty—whom Doubledick saw hurriedly, almost momentarily, but saw well. He particularly noticed this officer waving his sword, and rallying his men with an eager and excited cry, when they fired in obedience to his gesture, and Major Taunton dropped.

It was over in ten minutes more, and Doubledick returned to the spot where he had laid the best friend man ever had, on a coat spread upon the wet clay. Major Taunton's uniform was opened at the breast, and on his shirt were three little spots of blood.

"Dear Doubledick," said he, "I am dying."

"For the love of Heaven, no!" exclaimed the other, kneeling down beside him, and passing his arm round his neck to raise his head. "Taunton! My preserver, my guardian angel, my witness! Dearest, truest, kindest of human beings! Taunton! For God's sake!"

The bright dark eyes—so very, very dark.

now, in the pale face—smiled upon him; and the hand he had kissed thirteen years ago, laid itself fondly on his breast.

"Write to my mother. You will see Home again. Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her, as it comforts me."

He spoke no more, but faintly signed for a moment towards his hair as it fluttered in the wind. The Ensign understood him. He smiled again when he saw that, and gently turning his face over on the supporting arm as if for rest, died, with his hand upon the breast in which he had revived a soul.

No dry eye looked on Ensign Richard Doubledick, that melancholy day. He buried his friend on the field, and became a lone, bereaved man. Beyond his duty he appeared to have but two remaining cares in life; one, to preserve the little packet of hair he was to give to Taunton's mother; the other, to encounter that French officer who had rallied the men under whose fire Taunton fell. A new legend now began to circulate among our troops; and it was, that when he and the French officer came face to face once more, there would be weeping in France.

The war went on—and through it went the exact picture of the French officer on the one side, and the bodily reality upon the other—until the Battle of Toulouse was fought. In the returns sent home, appeared these words: "Severely wounded, but not dangerously, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick."

At Midsummer time in the year eighteen hundred and fourteen, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, now a browned soldier, seven and thirty years of age, came home to England, invalided. He brought the hair with him, near his heart. Many a French officer had been seen, since that day; many a dreadful night, in searching with men and lanterns for his wounded, had he relieved French officers lying disabled; but, the mental picture and the reality had never come together.

Though he was weak and suffered pain, he lost not an hour in getting down to Frome in Somersetshire, where Taunton's mother lived. In the sweet, compassionate words that naturally present themselves to the mind to-night, "he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

It was a Sunday evening, and the lady sat at her quiet garden-window, reading the Bible; reading to herself, in a trembling voice, that very passage in it as I have heard him tell. He heard the words; "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"

He had to pass the window; and the bright dark eyes of his debased time seemed to look at him. Her heart told her who he was; she came to the door, quickly, and fell upon his neck.

"He saved me from ruin, made me a human creature, won me from infamy and shame. O God, for ever bless him! As He will, He will!"

"He will!" the lady answered. "I know

he is in Heaven!" Then she piteously cried, "But, O, my darling boy, my darling boy!"

Never, from the hour when Private Richard Doubledick enlisted at Chatham, had the Private, Corporal, Sergeant, Sergeant-Major, Ensign, or Lieutenant, breathed his right name, or the name of Mary Marshall, or a word of the story of his life, into any ear, except his reclainer's. That previous scene in his existence was closed. He had firmly resolved that his expiation should be, to live unknown; to disturb no more the peace that had long grown over his old offences; to let it be revealed when he was dead, that he had striven and suffered, and had never forgotten; and then, if they could forgive him and believe him—well, it would be time enough—time enough!

But, that night, remembering the words he had cherished for two years, "Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her, as it comforts me," he related everything. It gradually seemed to him, as if in his maturity he had recovered a mother; it gradually seemed to her, as if in her bereavement she had found a son. During his stay in England, the quiet garden into which he had slowly and painfully crept, a stranger, became the boundary of his home; when he was able to rejoin his regiment in the spring, he left the garden, thinking was this indeed the first time he had ever turned his face towards the old colours, with a woman's blessing!

He followed them—so ragged, so scarred and pierced now, that they would scarcely hold together—to Quatre Bras, and Ligny. He stood beside them, in an awful stillness of many men, shadowy through the mist and drizzle of a wet June forenoon, on the field of Waterloo. And down to that hour, the picture in his mind of the French officer had never been compared with the reality.

The famous regiment was in action early in the battle, and received its first check in many an eventful year, when he was seen to fall. But, it swept on to avenge him, and left behind it no such creature in the world of consciousness, as Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Through pits of mire, and pools of rain; along deep ditches, once roads, that were pounded and ploughed to pieces by artillery, heavy waggons, tramp of men and horses, and the struggle of every wheeled thing that could carry wounded soldiers; jolted among the dying and the dead, so disfigured by blood and mud as to be hardly recognisable for humanity; undisturbed by the moaning of men, and the shrieking of horses, which, newly taken from the peaceful pursuits of life, could not endure the sight of the stragglers lying by the wayside, never to resume their toilsome journey; dead, as to any sentient life that was in it, and yet alive; the form that had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, with whose praises England

rang, was conveyed to Brussels. There, it was tenderly laid down in hospital : and there it lay, week after week, through the long bright summer days, until the harvest, spared by war, had ripened and was gathered in.

Over and over again, the sun rose and set upon the crowded city ; over and over again, the moonlight nights were quiet on the plains of Waterloo ; and all that time was a blank to what had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick. Rejoicing troops marched into Brussels, and marched out ; brothers and fathers, sisters, mothers, and wives, came thronging thither, drew their lots of joy or agony, and departed ; so many times a day, the bells rang ; so many times, the shadows of the great buildings changed ; so many lights sprang up at dusk ; so many feet passed here and there upon the pavements ; so many hours of sleep and cooler air of night succeeded ; indifferent to all, a marble face lay on a bed, like the face of a recumbent statue on the tomb of Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Slowly laboring, at last, through a long heavy dream of confused time and place, presenting faint glimpses of army surgeons whom he knew, and of faces that had been familiar to his youth—dearest and kindest among them, Mary Marshall's, with a solicitude upon it more like reality than anything he could discern—Lieutenant Richard Doubledick came back to life. To the beautiful life of a calm autumn-evening sunset. To the peaceful life of a fresh quiet room with a large window standing open ; a balcony beyond, in which were moving leaves and sweet-smelling flowers ; beyond again, the clear sky, with the sun full in his sight, pouring its golden radiance on his bed.

It was so tranquil and so lovely, that he thought he had passed into another world. And he said in a faint voice, "Taunton, are you near me ?"

A face bent over him. Not his ; his mother's.

"I came to nurse you. We have nursed you, many weeks. You were moved here, long ago. Do you remember nothing ?"

"Nothing."

The lady kissed his cheek, and held his hand, soothing him.

"Where is the regiment ? What has happened ? Let me call you mother. What has happened, mother ?"

"A great victory, dear. The war is over, and the regiment was the bravest in the field."

His eyes kindled, his lips trembled, he sobbed, and the tears ran down his face. He was very weak : too weak to move his hand.

"Was it dark just now ?" he asked presently.

"No."

"It was only dark to me ! Something passed away, like a black shadow. But, as it

went, and the sun—O the blessed sun, how beautiful it is !—touched my face, I thought I saw a light white cloud pass out at the door. Was there nothing that went out ?"

She shook her head, and, in a little while, he fell asleep : she still holding his hand, and soothing him.

From that time, he recovered. Slowly, for he had been desperately wounded in the head, and had been shot in the body ; but, making some little advance every day. When he had gained sufficient strength to converse as he lay in bed, he soon began to remark that Mrs. Taunton always brought him back to his own history. Then, he recalled his preserver's dying words, and thought, "it comforts her."

One day, he awoke out of a sleep, refreshed, and asked her to read to him. But, the curtain of the bed, softening the light, which she always drew back when he awoke, that she might see him from her table at the bedside where she sat at work, was held undrawn ; and a woman's voice spoke, which was not hers.

"Can you bear to see a stranger ?" it said softly. "Will you like to see a stranger ?"

"Stranger !" he repeated. The voice awoke old memories, before the days of Private Richard Doubledick.

"A stranger now, but not a stranger once," it said in tones that thrilled him. "Richard, dear Richard, lost through so many years, my name—"

He cried out her name, "Mary !" and she held him in her arms, and his head lay on her bosom.

"I am not breaking a rash vow, Richard. These are not Mary Marshall's lips that speak. I have another name."

She was married.

"I have another name, Richard. Did you ever hear it ?"

"Never !"

He looked into her face, so pensively beautiful, and wondered at the smile upon it through her tears.

"Think again, Richard. Are you sure you never heard my altered name ?"

"Never !"

"Don't move your head to look at me, dear Richard. Let it lie here, while I tell my story. I loved a generous, noble man ; loved him with my whole heart ; loved him for years and years ; loved him faithfully, devotedly ; loved him with no hope of return ; loved him, knowing nothing of his highest qualities—not even knowing that he was alive. He was a brave soldier. He was honoured and beloved by thousands of thousands, when the mother of his dear friend found me, and showed me that in all his triumphs he had never forgotten me. He was wounded in a great battle. He was brought, dying, here, into Brussels. I came to watch and tend him, as I would have joyfully gone, with such a purpose, to the dreariest ends of the earth. When he knew

no one else, he knew me. When he suffered most, he bore his sufferings barely murmuring, content to rest his head where yours rests now. When he lay at the point of death, he married me,* that he might tell me Wife before he died. And the name, my dear love, that I took on that forgotten night——”

“I know it now!” he sobbed. “The shadowy remembrance strengthens. It is come back. I thank Heaven that my mind is quite restored! My Mary, kias me; lull this weary head to rest, or I shall die of gratitude. His parting words are fulfilled. I see Home again!”

Well! They were happy. It was a long recovery, but they were happy through it all. The snow had melted on the ground, and the birds were singing in the leafless thickets of the early spring, when those three were first able to ride out together, and when people flocked about the open carriage to cheer and congratulate Captain Richard Doubledick.

But, even then, it became necessary for the Captain, instead of returning to England, to complete his recovery in the climate of Southern France. They found a spot upon the Rhone, within a ride of the old town of Avignon and within view of its broken bridge, which was all they could desire; they lived there, together, six months; then returned to England. Mrs. Taunton growing old after three years—though not so old as that her bright dark eyes were dimmed—and remembering that her strength had been benefited by the change, resolved to go back for a year to those parts. So, she went with a faithful servant, who had often carried her son in his arms; and she was to be rejoined and escorted home, at the year's end, by Captain Richard Doubledick.

She wrote regularly to her children (as she called them now), and they to her. She went to the neighbourhood of Aix; and there, in their own chateau near the farmer's house she rented, she grew into intimacy with a family belonging to that part of France. The intimacy began, in her often meeting among the vineyards a pretty child: a girl with a most compassionate heart, who was never tired of listening to the solitary English lady's stories of her poor son and the cruel wars. The family were as gentle as the child, and at length she came to know them so well, that she accepted their invitation to pass the last month of her residence abroad, under their roof. All this intelligence she wrote home, piecemeal as it came about, from time to time; and, at last, enclosed a polite note from the head of the chateau, soliciting, on the occasion of his approaching mission to that neighbourhood, the honour of the company of cet homme si justement célèbre, Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick.

Captain Doubledick; now a hardy handsome man in the full vigour of life, broader across the chest and shoulders than he had

ever been before; dispatched a courteous reply, and followed it in person. Travelling through all that extent of country after three years of Peace, he blessed the better days on which the world had fallen. The corn was golden, not drenched in unnatural red; was bound in sheaves for food, not trodden underfoot by men in mortal fight. The smoke rose up from peaceful hearths, not blazing ruins. The carts were laden with the fair fruits of the earth, not with wounds and death. To him who had so often seen the terrible reverse, these things were beautiful indeed, and they brought him in a softened spirit to the old chateau near Aix, upon a deep blue evening.

It was a large chateau of the genuine old ghostly kind, with round towers, and extinguishers and a high leaden roof, and more windows than Aladdin's Palace. The lattice blinds were all thrown open, after the heat of the day, and there were glimpses of rambling walls and corridors within. Then, there were immense outbuildings, fallen into partial decay, masses of dark trees, terrace-gardens, balustrades; tanks of water, too weak to play and too dirty to work; statues, weeds, and thickets of iron-railing that seemed to have overgrown themselves like the shrubberies, and to have branched out in all manner of wild shapes. The entrance doors stood open, as doors often do in that country when the heat of the day is past; and the Captain saw no bell or knocker, and walked in.

He walked into a lofty stone hall, refreshingly cool and gloomy after the glare of a Southern day's travel. Extending along the four sides of this hall, was a gallery, leading to suites of rooms; and it was lighted from the top. Still, no bell was to be seen.

“Faith,” said the Captain, halting, ashamed of the clanking of his boots, “this is a ghostly beginning!”

He started back, and felt his face turn white. In the gallery, looking down at him, stood the French officer: the officer whose picture he had carried in his mind so long and so far. Compared with the original, at last—in every lineament how like it was!

He moved, and disappeared, and Captain Richard Doubledick heard his steps coming quickly down into the hall. He entered through an archway. There was a bright, sudden look upon his face. Much such a look as it had worn in that fatal moment.

Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick? Enchanted to receive him! A thousand apologies! The servants were all out in the air. There was a little fête among them in the garden. In effect, it was the fête day of my daughter, the little cherished and protected of Madame Taunton.

He was so gracious and so frank, that Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick could not withhold his hand. “It is the hand of a brave Englishman,” said the French officer, retaining it while he spoke. “I could

respect a brave Englishman, even as my foe; how much more as my friend! I, also, am a soldier."

"He has not remembered me, as I have remembered him; he did not take such note of my face, that day, as I took of his," thought Captain Richard Doubledick. "How shall I tell him!"

The French officer conducted his guest into a garden, and presented him to his wife: an engaging and beautiful woman, sitting with Mrs. Taunton in a whimsical old-fashioned pavilion. His daughter, her fair young face beaming with joy, came running to embrace him; and there was a boy-baby to tumble down among the orange-trees on the broad steps, in making for his father's legs. A multitude of children-visitors were dancing to sprightly music; and all the servants and peasants about the chateau were dancing too. It was a scene of innocent happiness that might have been invented for the climax of the scenes of Peace which had soothed the captain's journey.

He looked on, greatly troubled in his mind, until a resounding bell rang, and the French officer begged to show him his rooms. They went upstairs into the gallery from which the officer had looked down; and Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick was cordially welcomed to a grand outer chamber, and a smaller one within, all clocks, and draperies, and hearths, and brazen dogs, and tiles, and cool devices, and elegance, and vastness.

"You were at Waterloo," said the French officer.

"I was," said Captain Richard Doubledick. "And at Badajoz."

Left alone with the sound of his own stern voice in his ears, he sat down to consider, What shall I do, and how shall I tell him? At that time, unhappily, many deplorable duels had been fought between English and French officers, arising out of the recent war; and these duels, and how to avoid this officer's hospitality, were the uppermost thought in Captain Richard Doubledick's mind.

He was thinking, and letting the time run out in which he should have dressed for dinner, when Mrs. Taunton spoke to him outside the door, asking if he could give her the letter he had brought from Mary? "His mother above all," the Captain thought. "How shall I tell her?"

"You will form a friendship with your host, I hope," said Mrs. Taunton, whom he hurriedly admitted, "that will last for life. He is so true-hearted and so generous, Richard, that you can hardly fail to esteem one another. If He had been spared," she kissed (not without tears) the locket in which she wore his hair, "he would have appreciated him with his own magnanimity, and would have been truly happy that the evil days were past, which made such a man his enemy."

She left the room; and the Captain walked,

first to one window whence he could see the dancing in the garden, then to another window whence he could see the smiling prospect and the peaceful vineyards.

"Spirit of my departed friend," said he, "is it through thee, these better thoughts are rising in my mind! Is it thou who hast shown me, all the way I have been drawn to meet this man, the blessings of the altered time! Is it thou who hast sent thy stricken mother to me, to stay my angry hand! Is it from thee the whisper comes, that this man did his duty as thou didst—and as I did, through thy guidance, which has wholly saved me, here on earth—and that he did no more!"

He sat down, with his head buried in his hands, and, when he rose up, made the second strong resolution of his life: That neither to the French officer, nor to the mother of his departed friend, nor to any soul while either of the two was living, would he breathe what only he knew. And when he touched that French officer's glass with his own, that day at dinner, he secretly forgave him in the name of the Divine Forgiver of injuries.

Here, I ended my story as the first Poor Traveller. But, if I had told it now, I could have added that the time has since come when the son of Major Richard Doubledick, and the son of that French officer, friends as their fathers were before them, fought side by side in one cause: with their respective nations, like long-divided brothers whom the better times have brought together, fast united.

THE SECOND POOR TRAVELLER.

I AM, by trade (said the man with his arm in a sling), a shipwright. I am recovering from an unlucky chop that one of my mates gave me with an adze. When I am all right again, I shall get taken on in Chatham Yard. I have nothing else in particular to tell of myself, so I'll tell a bit of a story of a seaport town.

Acon-Virlaz the jeweller sat in his shop on the Common Hard of Belleriport smoking his evening pipe. Business was tolerably brisk in Belleriport just then. The great three-decker the Blunderbore (Admiral Pumpkinseed's flag-ship) had just come in from the southern seas with the rest of the squadron, and had been paid off. The big screw line-of-battle ship Fantail, Captain Sir Heaver Cole, K.C.B., had got her blue-peter up for Kamschatka, and her crew had been paid advance wages. The Dundrum war-steamer was fresh coppering in the graving dock, and her men were enjoying a three weeks' run ashore. The Barracouta, the Calabash, the Skullmasher, and the Nose-ring had returned from the African station with lots of prize money from captured slavers. The Jollyport division of Royal Marines—who had plenty of money to

spend, and spent it, too, — occupied the Marine barracks. The Ninety-eighth Plungers, together with the depot companies of the Fourteenth Royal Screamers, had marched in to relieve the Seventy-third Wrestlers. There was some thought of embodying, for garrison duty, in Belleriport the Seventh or West Swampshire Drabs regiment of Militia. Belleriport was full of sailors, soldiers, and marines. Seven gold-laced cocked hats could be observed on the door steps of the George Hotel at one time. Almost every lady's bonnet in the High Street had a military or naval officer's head looking under it. You could scarcely get into Miss Pyebord the pastrycook's shop for midshipmen. There were so many soldiers in the streets, that you were inclined to take the whole of the population of Belleriport for lobsters, and to imagine that half of them were boiled and the other half waiting to be. The Common Hard was as soft as a feather-bed with sailors. Lieutenant Hook at the Rendezvous was busy all day enrolling A B's, ordinaries, and stout lads. The Royal Grubbington victualling yard was turning out thousands of barrels of salt beef and pork and sea biscuits per diem. Huge guns were being hoisted on board ship; seaman-riggers, caulkers, carpenters, and shipwrights, were all some hundreds of degrees busier than bees; and sundry gentlemen in the dockyard, habited in simple suits of drab, marked with the broad arrow—with striped stockings and glazed hats, and after whose personal safety sentinels with fixed bayonets and wardens in oilskin coats affectionately looked — were busy too, in their way: dragging about chain-cables, blocks and spars, and loads of timber, steadily but sulkily; and, in their close-shaven, beetle-browed countenances, evincing a silent but profound disgust.

Acon-Virlaz had not done so badly during Belleriport's recent briskness. He was a jeweller; and sold watches, rings, chains, bracelets, snuff-boxes, brooches, shirt-studs, sleeve-buttons, pencil-cases, and true lovers' knots. But, his trade in jewels did not interfere with his also vending hammocks, telescopes, sou'-wester hats, lime-juice, maps, charts and log-books, Guernsey shirts, clasp knives, pea-coats, preserved meats, razors, swinging lamps, sea-chests, dancing-pumps, eye-glasses, waterproof overalls, patent blacking, and silk pocket-handkerchiefs emblazoned with the flags of all nations. Nor did his dealings in these articles prevent him from driving a very tidy little business in the purchase of gold dust, elephants' teeth, feathers and bandanas, from home-returned sailors; nor (so the censorious said) from deriving some pretty little profits from the cashing of seamen's advance notes, and the discounting of the acceptances of the officers of her majesty's army and navy; nor (so the downright libellous asserted) from doing a

little in the wine line, and a little in the picture line, and a good deal, when occasion required it, in the crimp line.

Acon-Virlaz sat in his shop on the Common Hard of Belleriport smoking his evening pipe. It was in the back shop that Acon-Virlaz sat. Above his head, hung the hammocks, the pilot-trowsers narrow at the knees and wide at the ancles, the swinging lamps, and the waterproof overalls. The front shop loomed dimly through a grove of pea-coats, sou'-wester hats, Guernsey shirts, and cans of preserved meat. One little gas jet in the back-shop — for the front gas was not yet lighted — flickered on the heterogeneous articles hanging and heaped up together all around. The gas just tipped with light the brass knobs of the drawers which ran round all the four sides of the shop, tier above tier, and held Moses knows how many more treasures of watchmaking, tailoring, and outfitting. The gas, just defined by feebly-shining threads, the salient lines and angles of a great iron safe in one corner; and finally the gas just gleamed — twinkled furtively, like a magpie looking into a marrow bone — upon the heap of jewellery collected upon the great slate-covered counter in Acon-Virlaz's back shop.

The counter was covered with slate; for, upon it Acon-Virlaz loved to chalk his calculations. It was ledger, day-book, and journal, all in one. The little curly-headed Jew boy who was clerk, shopman, messenger, and assistant-measurer in the tailoring department of the establishment, would as soon have thought of eating roast sucking-pig beneath Acon-Virlaz's nose, as of wiping, dusting, or, indeed, touching the sacred slate counter without special permission and authority from Acon-Virlaz himself.

By the way, it was not by that name that the jeweller and outfitter was known in Belleriport. He went by a simpler, homelier, shorter appellation: Moses, Levy, Sheeny — what you will; it does not much matter which; for most of the Hebrew nation have an inner name as well as an inner and richer life.

Acon-Virlaz was a little, plump, round, black-eyed, red-lipped, blue-bearded man. Age had begun to discount his head, and had given him sixty per cent of gray hairs. A-top he was bald, and wore a little skull-cap. He had large fat hands, all creased and tumbled, as if his skin were too large for him; and, on one forefinger, he wore a great cornelian signet-ring, about which there were all sorts of legends. Miriam, his daughter, said — but what have I to do with Miriam, his daughter? She does not enter into this history at all.

The evening pipe that Acon-Virlaz was smoking was very mild and soothing. The blue haze went curling softly upwards, and seemed to describe pleasant figures of a d. d. as it ascended. Through the grove, across the front shop, Acon-Virlaz could see little

specks of gas from the lamps in the street; could hear Barney, his little clerk and shop-boy, softly whistling as he kept watch and ward upon the watches in the front window and the habiliments exposed for sale outside; could hear the sounds of a fiddle from the Admiral Nelson next door, where the men-of-war-men were dancing; could, by a certain, pleasant, subtle smell from regions yet farther back, divine that Mrs. Viriaz (her father was a Bar-Galli, and worth hills of gold) was cooking something nice for supper.

From the pleasures of his pipe Acon-Virlaz turned to the pleasures of his jewellery. It lay there on the slate-covered counter, rich and rare. Big diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds, sapphires, amethysts, topazes, turquoises, and pearls. By the jewels lay gold. Gold in massy chains, in mourning rings, in massy bracelets, in chased snuff-boxes—in gold snuff too—that is in dingy, dull dust from the Guinea coast; in flakes and mis-shapen lumps from the mine; in toy-watches, in brave chronometers, in lockets, vinaigrettes, brooches, and such woman's gear. The voice of the watches was dumb; the little flasks were scentless; but, how much beauty, life, strength, power, lay in these coloured baubles! Acon-Virlaz sighed.

Here, a little clock in the front shop, which nestled ordinarily in the midst of a wilderness of boots, and thought apparently a great deal more of itself than its size warranted, after a prodigious deal of running down, gasping, and clucking, struck nine. Acon-Virlaz laid down his pipe, and turning the gas a little higher, was about calling out to Mrs. Viriaz, that daughter of Bar-Galli (she was very stout, and fried fish in sky-blue satin), to know what she had got for supper, when a dark body became mistily apparent in the recesses of the grove of Guernsey shirts and sou'-westers, shutting out the view of the distant specks of gas in the street beyond. At the same time, a voice, that seemed to run upon a tramway, so smooth and sliding was it, said, three or four times over, "How is to-night with you, Mr. Viriaz,—how is it with you this beautiful night? Aha!"

The voice and the body belonged to a gentleman of Mr. Viriaz's persuasion, who was stout and large, and very elastic in limb, and very voluble in delivery, in the which there was, I may remark, a tendency to reiteration, and an oily softness (inducing an idea that the tramway I mentioned had been sedulously greased), and a perceptible lip. Mr. Viriaz's friend rubbed his hands (likewise smooth and well-greased) continually. He was somewhat loosely jointed, which caused him to wag his head from side to side as he talked, after the fashion of an image; and his face would have been a great deal handsomer, if his complexion had not been quite so white and pasty, and his eyes not quite so pink, and both

together not quite so like a suet pudding with two raisins in it. Mr. Viriaz's friend's name was Mr. Ben-Daoud, and he came from Westhampton, where he discounted bills and sold clocks.

"Take a seat, Ben," said the jeweller, when he had recognised his friend and shaken hands with him; "Mrs. V. will be down directly. All well at home? Take a pipe?"

"I will just sit down a little minute, and thank you, Mr. Viriaz," Ben-Daoud answered volubly; "and all are well but little Zeeky, who has thrushes, and has swoollen, the dear child, much since yesterday; but beg Mrs. Viriaz not to disturb herself for me,—for I am not long here, and will not take a pipe, having a cold, and being about to go a long journey to-morrow. Aha!"

All this, Mr. Ben-Daoud said with the extreme volubility which I have noticed, and in the exact order in which his words are set down, but without any vocal punctuation. There was considerable doubt among the people as to Mr. Ben-Daoud's nationality. Some said that he came from Poland; others, that he hailed from Frankfort-on-the-Maine; some inclined to the belief that Amsterdam, in Holland, was his natal place; some, that Gibraltar had given him birth, or the still more distant land of Tangier. At all events, of whatsoever nation he was, or if not of any, he was for all Jewry, and knew the time of the day remarkably well. He had been in the rabbit-skin line of business before he took to selling clocks, to which he added, when regiments were in garrison, at Westhampton, the art of discounting.

"Going on a journey, eh, Ben?" asked Acon-Virlaz. "Business?"

"Oh, business of course, Mr. Viriaz," his friend replied. "Always business. I have some little moneys to look up, and some little purchases to make, and, indeed, humbly wish to turn a little penny; for, I have very many heavy calls to meet next month,—a little bill or two of mine you hold, by the way, among the rest, Mr. Viriaz."

"True," the jeweller said, rather nervously, and putting his hand on a great leathern portfolio in his breast pocket, in which he kept his acceptances; "and shall you be long gone, Mr. Daoud?"

This "Mr. Daoud," following upon the former familiar "Ben," was said without sternness, but spoke the creditor awakened to his rights. It seemed to say, "Smoke, drink, and be merry till your 'accepted payable at such a date' comes due; but pay then, or I'll sell you up like death."

Mr. Ben-Daoud seemed to have an inkling of this; for, he wagged his head, rubbed his hands, and answered, more volubly than ever, "Oh, as to that, Mr. Viriaz, dear sir, my journey is but of two days lasting. I shall be back the day after to-morrow, and with

something noticeable in the way of diamonds. Aha!"

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Acon-Virlaz, glancing towards the drawer where his jewels were; for you may be sure he had swept them all away into safety before his friend had completed his entrance. "Diamonds! Where are you going for diamonds, Ben?"

"Why, to the great fair that is held to-morrow, Mr. Virlaz, as well you know."

"Fair? Ben? Is there any fair to-morrow near Belleriport?"

"Why, bless my heart, Mr. Virlaz," Ben-Daoud responded, holding up his fat hands; "can it be that you, so respectable and noticeable a man among our people, don't know that to-morrow is the great jewel fair that is held once in every hundred years, at which diamonds, rubies, and all other pretty stones are sold cheap,—cheap as dirt, my dear—a hundred thousand guineas-worth for sixpence, one may say. Your grandfather must have been there, and well he made his market, you may be sure. Aha! Good man!"

"I never heard of such a thing," gasped Acon-Virlaz, perfectly amazed and bewildered. "And what do you call this fair?"

"Why, Sky Fair! As well you should know, dear sir."

"Sky Fair?" repeated the jeweller.

"Sky Fair," answered Ben-Daoud.

"But whereabouts is it?"

"Come here," the voluble man said. He took hold of Acon-Virlaz by the wrist, and led him through the grove of pea-coats into the front shop; through the front shop into the open street; and then pointing upwards, he directed the gaze of the Jew to where, in the otherwise unilluminated sky, there was shining one solitary star.

"Don't it look pretty?" he asked, sinking his voice into a confidential whisper. "Don't it look like a diamond, and glitter and twinkle as if some of our people the lapidaries in Amsterdam had cut it into facets. That's where Sky Fair is, Mr. Virlaz. Aha!"

"And you are going there to-morrow?" Acon-Virlaz asked, glancing uneasily at his companion.

"Of course I am," Ben-Daoud replied, "with my little bag of money to make my little purchases. And saving your presence, dear sir, I think you will be a great fool if you don't come with me, and make some little purchases too. For, diamonds, Mr. Virlaz, are not so easily come by every day, as in Sky Fair; and a hundred years is a long time to wait before one can make another such bargain."

"I'll come, Ben," the jeweller cried, enthusiastically. "I'll come; and if ever I can do you any little obligation in the way of moneys, I will." And he grasped the hand of Ben-Daoud, who sold clocks and discounted.

"Why, that's right," the other returned. "And I'll come for you at eight o'clock to-morrow, punctually; so get your little bag

of money and your nightcap and a comb ready."

"But," the jeweller asked, with one returning tinge of suspicion, "how are we to get there, Ben?"

"Oh," replied Mr. Ben-Daoud, coolly, "we'll ave a shay."

Sky Fair!—diamonds!—cheap bargains! Acon Virlaz could think of nothing else all the time of supper; which was something very nice indeed in the fish way, and into the cooking of which oil entered largely. He was so preoccupied, that Mrs. Virlaz, and Miriam, his daughter, who had large eyes and a coral necklace (for week-days), were fain to ask him the cause thereof; and he, like a good and tender husband and father as he was (and as most Hebrews, to their credit, are), told them of Ben-Daoud's marvellous story, and of his intended journey.

The next morning, as the clock struck eight, the sound of wheels was heard before Acon-Virlaz's door in the Common Hard of Belleriport, and a handful of gravel was playfully thrown against the first-floor window by the hands of Ben-Daoud of Westhampton.

But it needed no gravel, no noise of wheels, no striking of clocks, to awaken Acon-Virlaz. He had been up and dressed since six o'clock; and, leaving Mrs. Virlaz peacefully and soundly sleeping; and hastily swallowing some hot coffee prepared by Barney the lad (to whom he issued strict injunctions concerning the conduct of the warehouse during the day); he descended into the street, and was affectionately hailed by his fellow voyager to Sky Fair.

The seller of clocks sat in the "shay" of which he had spoken to Acon-Virlaz. It was a dusky little concern, very loose on its springs, and worn and rusty in its gear. As to the animal that drew it, Mr. Ben-Daoud mentioned by the way that it was a discount pony; having been taken as an equivalent for cash in numberless bills negotiated in the Westhampton garrison, and had probably been worth, in his time, considerably more than his weight in gold.

Said pony, if he was a rum'un to look at—which, indeed, he was, being hairy where he should have been smooth, and having occasional bald places, as though he were in the habit of scratching himself with his hoofs—which hoofs, coupled with his whity-brown ankles, gave him the appearance of having indifferent bluchers and dirty white socks on—was a good'un to go. So remarkably good was he in going, that he soon left behind, the high street of Belleriport, where the shop-boys were sleepily taking down the shutters; where housemaids were painfully elaborating the doorsteps with hearth-stones, to be soiled by the first visitor's dirty boots (such is the way of the world); where the milkman was making his early morning calls, and the night policemen were going

home from duty; and the third lieutenant of the Blunderbore—who had been ashore on leave, and was a little shaken about the eyes still—was hastening to catch the “beef-boat” to convey him to his ship. Next, the town itself did the pony leave behind: the outskirts, the outlying villages, the ruined stocks and deserted pound, the Port-Admiral’s villa: all these he passed, running as fast as a constable, or a bill, until he got at last into a broad white road, which Acon-Virlaz never remembered to have seen before; a road with a high hedge on either side, and to which there seemed to be no end.

Mr. Ben-Daoud drove the pony in first-rate style. His head and the animal’s wagged in concert; and the more he flourished his whip, the more the pony went; and both seemed to like it. The great white road sent up no dust. Its stones, if stones it had, never grated nor gave out a sound beneath the wheels of the “shay.” It was only very white and broad, and seemed to have no end.

Not always white, however; for, as they progressed, it turned in colour first milky-grey, then what schoolboys call, in connection with the fluid served out to them at breakfast time, sky-blue; then a deep, vivid, celestial blue. And the high hedge on either side melted by degrees into the same hue; and Acon-Virlaz began to feel curiously feathery about the body, and breezy about the lungs. He caught hold of the edge of the “shay,” as though he were afraid of falling over. He shut his eyes from time to time, as though he were dizzy. He began to fancy that he was in the sky.

“There is Sky Fair, Mr. Virlaz!” Ben-Daoud suddenly said, pointing a-head with his whip.

At that moment, doubtless through the superior attractions of Sky Fair, the dusky “shay” became of so little account to Acon-Virlaz as to disappear entirely from his sight and mind, though he had left his nightcap and comb (his little bag of money was safe in his side-pocket, trust him), on the cushion. At the same moment it must have occurred to the discount pony to put himself out at living in some very remote corner of creation, for, he vanished altogether too; and Acon-Virlaz almost fancied that he saw the beast’s collar fall fifty thousand fathoms five, true as a plumb-line, into space; and the reins, which but a moment before Ben-Daoud had held, flutter loosely away, like feathers.

He found himself treading upon a hard, loose, gritty surface, which, on looking down, appeared like diamond-dust.

“Which it is,” Mr. Ben-Daoud explained, when Acon-Virlaz timidly asked him. “Cheap as dirt here! Capital place to bring your cut-throat razors to be sharpened, Mr. Virlaz.”

The jeweller felt inclined, for the moment, to resent this pleasantry as somewhat per-

sonal; for, to say truth, the razors in which he dealt were not of the primeest steel.

There was a great light. The brightest sun-light that Acon-Virlaz had ever seen was but a poor farthing candle compared to this resplendency. There was a great gate through which they had to pass to the fair. The gate seemed to Acon-Virlaz as if all the jewellery and wrought gold in the world had been half-fused, half-welded together, into one monstrous arabesque or trellis-work. There was a little porter’s lodge by the gate, and a cunning-looking little man by it, with a large bunch of keys at his girdle. The thing seemed impossible and ridiculous, yet Acon-Virlaz could not help fancying that he had seen the cunning little porter before, and, of all places in the world, in London, at the lock-up house in Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, kept by Mr. Mephibosheth, to whose red-headed little turnkey, Benjy, he bore an extraordinary resemblance.

Who is to tell of the glories of Sky Fair? Who, indeed, unless he had a harp of gold strung with diamonds? Who is to tell of the long lines of dazzlingly white booths, hundreds, if not thousands, if not millions, of miles in extent, where jewels of surpassing size and purest water were sold by the peck, like peas; by the pound, like spice nuts; by the gallon, like table beer? Who is to tell of the swings, the roundabouts, the throwing of sticks, each stick surmounted by a diamond as big as an ostrich egg; the live armadillos with their jewelled scales; the scratchers, coruscating like meteors; the gingerbread kings and queens; the whole fun of the fair, one dazzling, blinding, radiating mass of gold and gems!

It was not Acon Virlaz who could tell much about these wondrous things in after days; for he was too occupied with his little bag of money, and his little fairings. Ben-Daoud had spoken the truth: diamonds were as cheap as dirt in Sky Fair. In an inconceivably short space of time, and by the expenditure of a few halfpence, the jeweller had laid in a stock of precious stones. But, he was not satisfied with pockets-full, bags-full, hats-full, of unset, uncut gems. There were heaps of jewelled trinkets, chains, bracelets, rings, piled up for sale. He hankered after these. He bought heaps of golden rings. He decorated his wrists and ankles with bracelets and bangles enough for a Bayadere. He might have been a dog, for the collars round his neck. He might have been an Ambrose Gwynnett hung in chains, for the profusion of those ornaments in gold, with which he loaded himself. And then he went in for solid services of plate, and might have been a butler or a philanthropist, for the piles of ewers, salvers, candelabra, and goblets which he accumulated in his hands, under his arms, on his head.

More gold! more jewels! More—more—
Till a bell began to ring,—a loud, clanging.

voiceful golden bell, carried by a shining bellman, and the clapper of which was one huge diamond. The thousands of people who, a moment before, had been purchasing jewels and gold, no sooner heard the bell than they began to scamper like mad towards the gate; and, at the same time, Acon-Virlaz heard the bellman making proclamation that Sky Fair would close in ten minutes time, and that every man, woman, or child found within the precincts of the fair, were it only for the thousandth part of the tithe of a moment after the clock had struck Twelve, would be turned into stone for a hundred years.

Till the men, women, and children from every nation under the sun (he had not observed them until now, so intent had he been on his purchases), came tearing past him; treading on his toes, bruising his ribs, jostling him, pushing him from side to side, screaming to him with curses to move on quicker, or to get out of the way. But, he could not move on quicker. His gold stuck to him. His jewels weighed him down. Invisible clogs seemed to attach themselves to his feet. He kept dropping his precious wares, and, for the life of him, could not refrain from stopping to pick them up; in doing which he dropped more.

Till Mr. Ben-Daoud passed him with a girdle of big diamonds, tied round his waist in a blue bird's-eye handkerchief, like a professional pedestrian.

Till the great bell from ringing intermittent peals kept up one continuous clang. Till a clock above, like a catherine wheel, which Acon-Virlaz had not before noticed, began to let off rockets of minutes, Roman candles of seconds. Till the bellman's proclamation merged into one sustained roar of Oh yes! Oh yes! Till the red-headed gate-keeper, who was like Mr. Mephibosheth's turnkey, gave himself up to an unceasing scream of "All out! All out!" whirling his keys above his head, so that they scattered sparks and flakes of fire all around.

Till fifty thousand other bells began to clang, and fifty million other voices to scream. Till all at once there was silence, and the clock began to strike slowly, sadly, One, two, three, four—to Twelve.

Acon-Virlaz was within a few feet of the gate when the fatal clock began to strike. By a desperate effort he cast aside the load of plate which impeded his movements. He tore off his diamond-laden coat; he cast his waistcoat to the winds, and plunged madly into the throng that blocked up the entrance.

To find himself too late. The great gates closed with a heavy shock, and Acon-Virlaz reeled away from them in the rebound, bruised, bleeding, and despairing. He was too late. Sky Fair was closed, and he was to be turned into stone for a hundred years.

The red-headed doorkeeper (who, by the way squinted abominably) was leaning with

his back to the gate, drumming with his keys on the bars.

"It's a beautiful day to be indoors," he said, consolingly. "It's bitter cold outside"

Acon-Virlaz shuddered. He felt his heart turning into stone within him. He fell on his knees before the red-headed doorkeeper; and with tears, sobs, groans, entreated him to open the gate. He offered him riches, he offered him the hand of Miriam his large-eyed daughter: all for one turn of the key in the lock of the gate of Sky Fair.

"an't be done," the doorkeeper remarked, shaking his head. "Till Sky Fair opens again, you can't be let out."

Again and again did the jeweller entreat, until he at last appeared to make an impression on the red-headed janitor.

"ell, I'll tell you what I can do for you, old gentleman," he said: "I daren't open the gate for my life; but there's a window in my lodge; and if you choose to take your chance of jumping out of it (it isn't far to fall) you can."

Acon-Virlaz, uttering a confused medley of thanks, was about to rush into the lodge, when the gatekeeper laid his hand upon his arm.

"By the way, mister," he said, "you may as well give me that big signet ring on your finger, as a token to remind you of all the fine things you promised me when I come your way."

The jeweller hastily plucked off the desired trinket, and gave it to his red-headed deliverer. Then, he darted into the narrow, dark porter's lodge, overturned a round table, on which was the doorkeeper's dinner (it smelt very much like liver and bacon), and clambered up to a very tall, narrow window.

He leaned his hands on the sill, and thrusting his head out to see how far he had to jump, descried, immediately, beneath him the dusty shay, the discount pony, and Mr. Ben-Daoud with a lighted cigar in his mouth and the reins in his hand, just ready to start.

"Hold hard!" screamed Acon-Virlaz. "Hold hard! Ben, my dear friend, my old friend: hold hard, and take me in!"

Mr. Ben-Daoud's reply was concise but conclusive:

"Go to Bermondsey," he said, and whipped his pony.

The miserable man groaned aloud in despair; for the voice of the doorkeeper urged him to be quick about it, if he was going to jump; and he felt, not only his heart, but his limbs, becoming cold and stony.

Shutting his eyes and clenching his teeth, he jumped and fell, down, down into space. According to his own calculations, he must have fallen at least sixty thousand miles and for six months in succession; but, according to Mrs. Acon-Virlaz and Miriam his large-eyed daughter, he only fell from his arm-chair

into the fire-place, striking his head against the tongs as he fell; having come home a little while before, with no such thing about him as his beautiful seal-ring; and being slightly the worse for liquor, not to say drunk.

THE THIRD POOR TRAVELLER.

You wait my story, next! Ah, well!
Such marvels as you two have told
You must not think that I can tell;
For I am only twelve years old.
Ere long I hope I shall have been
On my first voyage, and wonders seen.
Some princess I may help to free
From pirates on a far-off sea;
Or, on some desert isle be left,
Of friends and shipmates all bereft.

For the first time I venture forth,
From our blue mountains of the north.
My kinsman kept the lodge that stood
Guarding the entrance near the wood,
By the stone gateway gray and old,
With quaint devices carved about,
And broken shields; while dragons bold
Glared on the common world without;
And the long trembling ivy spray
Half hid the centuries' decay.
In solitude and silence grand
The castle towered above the land:
The castle of the Earl, whose name
(Wrapped in old bloody legends) came
Down through the times when Truth and Right
Bent down to armed Pride and Might.
He owned the country far and near;
And, for some weeks in every year,
(When the brown leaves were falling fast
And the long, lingering autumn passed),
He would come down to hunt the deer,
With hound and horse in splendid pride.
The story lasts the live-long year,
The peasant's winter evening file,
When he is gone and they abide
In the lone quiet of their hills.

I longed, too, for the happy night,
When all with torches flaring bright
The crowding villagers would stand,
A patient, eager, waiting band,
Until the signal ran like flame
"They come!" and, slackening speed, they came.
Outriders first, in pomp and state,
Pranced on their horses thro' the gate;
Then the four steeds as black as night,
All decked with trappings blue and white,
Drew thro' the crowd that opened wide,
The Earl and Countess side by side.
The stern grave Earl, with formal smile
And glistening eyes and stately pride,
Could ne'er my childish gaze beguile
From the fair presence by his side.
The lady's soft sad glance, her eyes
(Like stars that shone in summer skies),
Her pure white face so calmly bent,
With gentle greetings round her sent;
Her look, that always seemed to gaze
Where the blue past had closed again
Over some happy shipwrecked days,
With all their freight of love and pain.
She did not even seem to see
The little lord upon her knee.

And yet he was like angel fair,
With rosy cheeks and golden hair,
That fell on boulders white as snow.
But the blue eyes that shone below
His clustering rings of auburn curls,
Were not his mother's, but the Earl's.

I feared the Earl, so cold and grim,
I never dared be seen by him.
When thro' our gate he used to ride,
My kinsman Walter bade me hide;
He said he was so stern.
So, when the hunt came past our way,
I always hasten'd to obey,
Until I heard the bugles play
The notes of their return.
But she—my very heart-strings stir
Whene'er I speak or think of her—
The whole wide world could never see
A noble lady such as she,
So full of angel charity.

Strange things of her our neighbours told
In the long winter evenings cold,
Around the fire. They would draw near
And speak half-whispering, as in fear:
As if they thought the Earl could hear
Their treason 'gainst his name.
They thought the story that his pride
Had stooped to wed a low-born bride,
A stain upon his fame.
Some said 'twas false; there could not be
Such blot on his nobility:
But others vowed that they had heard
The actual story word for word,
From one who well my lady knew,
And had declared the story true.

In a far village, little known,
She dwelt—so ran the tale—alone.
A widowed bride, yet, oh! so bright,
Shone through the mist of grief, her charms;
They said it was the loveliest sight,
She with her baby in her arms.
The Earl, one summer morning, rode
By the sea-shore where she abode;
Again he came,—that vision sweet
Drew him reluctant to her feet.
Fierce must the struggle in his heart
Have been, between his love and pride,
Until he chose that wondrous part,
To ask her to become his bride.
Yet, ere his noble name she bore,
He made her vow that nevermore
She would behold her child again,
But hide his name and hers from men.
The trembling promise duly spoken,
All links of the low past were broken,
And she arose to take her stand
Amid the nobles of the land.

Then all would wonder,—could it be
That one so lowly born as she,
Raised to such height of bliss, should
Still living in some weary dream?
'Tis true she bore with calmest grace
The honours of her lofty place,
Yet never smiled, in peace or joy,
Not even to greet her princely boy.
She heard, with face of white despair,
The cannon thunder through the air,
That she had given the Earl an heir.

Nay, even more (they whispered low
As if they scarce durst fancy so),
That, through her lefty wedded life,
No word, no tone, betrayed the wife.
Her look seemed ever in the past;
Never to him it grew more sweet;
The self-same weary glance she cast
Upon the grey-hound at her feet,
As upon him, who bade her claim
The crowning honour of his name.

This gossip, if old Walter heard,
He checked it with a scornful word:
I never durst such tales repeat;
He was too serious and discreet
To speak of what his lord might do.
Besides, he loved my lady too:
And many a time, I recollect,
They were together in the wood;
He, with an air of grave respect,
And earnest look, uncovered stood.
And though their speech I never heard,
(Save now and then a louder word,)
I saw he spake as none but one
She loved and trusted, durst have done;
For oft I watched them in the shade
That the close forest branches made,
Till slanting golden sunbeams came
And smote the fir-trees into flame,
A radiant glow round her lit,
Then down her white robe seemed to fit,
Gilding the brown leaves on the ground,
And all the feathery ferns around.
While by some gloomy pine she leant
And he in earnest talk would stand,
I saw the tear-drops, as she bent,
Fall on the flowers in her hand.
Strange as it seemed and seems to be,
That one so sad, so cold as she,
Could love a little child like me;
Yet so it was. I never heard
Such tender words as she would say,
Or murmurs, sweeter than a word,
Would breathe upon me as I lay.
While I, in smiling joy, would rest,
For hours, my head upon her breast.
Our neighbours said that none could see
In me the common childish charms,
(So grave and still I used to be,)
And yet she held me in her arms,
In a fond clasp, so close, so tight,—
I often dream of it at night.

She bade me tell her all—no other,
My childish thoughts e're cared to know;
For I—I never knew my mother;
I was an orphan long ago.
And I could all my fancies pour,
That gentle loving face before,
She liked to hear me tell her all;
How that day I had climbed the tree,
To make the largest fir-cones fall;
And how one day I hoped to be
A sailor on the deep blue sea—
She loved to hear it all!

Then wondrous things she used to tell,
Of the strange dreams that she had known.
I used to love to hear them well;
If only for her sweet low tone,
Sometimes so sad, although I knew
That such things never could be true.

One day she told me such a tale
It made me grow all cold and pale,
The fearful thing she told!
Of a poor woman mad and wild
Who coined the life-blood of her child,
Who, tempted by a fiend, had sold
The heart out of her breast for gold.
But, when she saw me frightened seem,
She smiled, and said it was a dream.
How kind, how fair she was; how good
I cannot tell you. If I could
You, too, would love her. The mere thought
Of her great love for me has brought
Tears in my eyes: though far away,
It seems as it were yesterday.
And just as when I look on high
Through the blue silence of the sky,
Fresh stars shine out, and more and more,
Where I could see so few before.
So, the more steadily I gaze
Upon those far-off misty days,
Fresh words, fresh tones, fresh memories start
Before my eyes and in my heart.
I can remember how one day
(Talking in silly childish way)
I said how happy I should be
If I were like her son—as fair,
With just such bright blue eyes as he,
And such long locks of golden hair.
A dark smile on her pale face broke,
And in strange solemn words she spoke:

"My own, my darling one—no, no!
I love you, far, far better so.
I would not change the look you bear,
Or one wave of your dark brown hair.
The mere glance of your sunny eyes,
Deep in my deepest soul I prize
Above that baby fair!
Not one of all the Earl's proud line
In beauty ever matched with thine.
And, 'tis by thy dark locks thou art
Bound even faster round my heart,
And made more wholly mine!"
And then she paused, and weeping said,
"You are like one who now is dead—
Who sleeps in a far distant grave.
O may God grant that you may be
As noble and as good as he,
As gentle and as brave!"
Then in my childish way I cried,
"The one you tell me of who died,
Was he as noble as the Earl?"
I see her red lips scornful curl,
I feel her hold my hand again
So tightly, that I shrank in pain—
I seem to hear her say,
"He whom I tell you of, who died,
He was so noble and so gay,
So generous and so brave,
That the proud Earl by his dear side
Would look a craven slave."
She paused; then, with a quivering sigh
She laid her hand upon my brow:
"Live like him, darling, and so die.
Remember that he tells you now,
True peace, real honour, and content,
In cheerful pious toil abide;
For gold and splendour are but sent
To curse our vanity and pride."

One day some childish fever pain
Burnt in my veins and fired my brain.

Moaning, I turned from side to side ;
 And, sobbing in my bed, I cried,
 Till night in calm and darkness crept
 Around me, and at last I slept.
 When suddenly I woke to see
 The Lady bending over me.
 The drops of cold November rain
 Were falling from her long, damp hair ;
 Her anxious eyes were dim with pain ;
 Yet she looked wondrous fair.
 Arrayed for some great feast she came,
 With stones that shone and burnt like flame.
 Wound round her neck, like some bright snake,
 And set like stars within her hair,
 They sparkled so, they seemed to make
 A glory everywhere.
 I felt her tears upon my face,
 Her kisses on my eyes ;
 And a strange thought I could not trace
 I felt within my heart arise ;
 And, half in feverish pain, I said :
 " O if my mother were not dead ! "
 And Walter bade me sleep ; but she
 Said, " Is it not the same to thee
 That I watch by thy bed ? "
 I answered her, " I love you, too ;
 But it can never be the same :
 She was no Countess like to you,
 Nor wore such sparkling stones of flame."
 O the wild look of fear and dread !
 The cry she gave of bitter woe !
 I often wonder what I said
 To make her moan and shudder so.

Through the long night she tended me
 With such sweet care and charity.
 But I should weary you to tell
 All that I know and love so well :
 Yet one night more stands out alone
 With a sad sweetness all its own.

The wind blew loud that dreary night.
 Its wailing voice I well remember ;
 The stars shone out so large and bright
 Upon the frosty fir-boughs white :
 That dreary night of cold December.
 I saw old Walter silent stand,
 Watching the soft last flakes of snow
 With looks I could not understand
 Of strange perplexity and woe.
 At last he turned and took my hand,
 And said the Countess just had sent
 To bid us come ; for she would fain
 See me once more, before she went
 Away,—never to come again.
 We came in silence thro' the wood
 (Our footfall was the only sound),
 To where the great white castle stood,
 With darkness shadowing it around.
 Breathless, we trod with cautious care—
 Up the great echoing marble stair ;
 Trembling, by Walter's hand I held,
 Scared by the splendours I beheld :
 Now thinking, Should the Earl appear !
 Now looking up with giddy fear
 To the dim vaulted roof, that spread
 Its gloomy arches overhead.

Along corridors we softly past,
 (My heart was beating loud and fast),
 And reached the Lady's room at last.
 A strange faint odour seemed to weigh
 Upon the dim and hushed air.
 One shaded lamp, with softened ray,

Scarce showed the gloomy splendour there.
 The dull red brands were burning low :
 And yet a fitful gleam of light,
 Would now and then with sudden glow,
 Start forth, then sink again in night.
 I gazed around, yet half in fear,
 Till Walter told me to draw near.
 And in the strange and flickering light,
 Towards the Lady's bed I crept.
 All folded round with snowy white,
 She lay (one would have said she slept)
 So still the look of that white face,
 It seemed as it were carved in stone.
 I paused before I dared to place
 Within her cold white hand my own.
 But, with a smile of sweet surprise,
 She turned to me her dreamy eyes ;
 And slowly, as if life were pain,
 She drew me in her arms to lie :
 She strove to speak, and strove in vain ;
 Each breath was like a long-drawn sigh,
 The throbs that seemed to shake her breast,
 The trembling clasp, so loose, and weak,
 At last grew calmer, and at rest ;
 And then she strove once more to speak :
 " My God, I thank thee, that my pain
 Of day by day and year by year,
 Has not been suffered all in vain,
 And I may die while he is near.
 I will not fear but that Thy grace
 Has swept away my sin and woe,
 And sent this little angel face,
 In my last hour to tell me so."
 (And here her voice grew faint and low)
 " My child where'er thy life may go,
 To know that thou art brave and true,
 Will pierce the highest heavens through,
 And even there my soul shall be
 More joyful for this thought of thee."
 She folded her white hands, and stayed,
 All cold and silently she lay :
 I knelt beside the bed, and prayed
 The prayer she used to make me say.
 I said it many times, and then
 She did not move, but seemed to be
 In a deep sleep, nor stirred again.
 No sound stirred in the silent room,
 Or broke the dim and solemn gloom,
 Save when the brands that burnt so low
 With noisy fitful gleam of light,
 Would spread around a sudden glow,
 Then sink in silence and in night.
 How long I stood I do not know :
 At last poor Walter came, and said
 (So sadly) that we now must go,
 And whispered, she we loved was dead.
 He bade me kiss her face once more,
 Then led me sobbing to the door.
 I scarcely knew what dying meant,
 Yet a strange grief, before unknown,
 Weighed on my spirit as we went
 And left her lying all alone.

We went to the far North once more,
 To seek the well-remembered home,
 Where my poor kinsman dwelt before,
 Whence now he was too old to roam ;
 And there six happy years we past,
 Happy and peaceful till the last ;
 When poor old Walter died, and he
 Blessed me and said I now might be
 A friar on the deep blue sea.

And so I go; and yet in spite
Of all the joys I long to know;
Though I look onward with delight,
With something of regret I go,
And young or old, on land or sea,
One guiding memory I shall take
Of what She prayed that I might be,
And what I will be for her sake!

THE FOURTH POOR TRAVELLER.

Now, first of all, I should like to know what you mean by a story? You mean what other people do? And pray what is that? You know, but you can't exactly tell. I thought so! In the course of a pretty long legal experience, I have never yet met with a party out of my late profession, who was capable of giving a correct definition of anything.

To judge by your looks, I suspect you are amused at my talking of any such thing ever having belonged to me as a profession. Ha! ha! Here I am, with my toes out of my boots, without a shirt to my back or a rap in my pocket, except the fourpence I get out of this charity (against the present administration of which I protest—but that's not the point), and yet not two years ago I was an attorney in large practice in a bursting big country town. I had a house in the High Street. Such a giant of a house that you had to get up six steps to knock at the front door. I had a footman to drive tramps like me off all or any one of my six hearth-stoned steps, if they dared sit down on all or any one of my six hearth-stoned steps;—a footman who would give me into custody now if I tried to shake hands with him in the streets. I decline to answer your questions if you ask me any. How I got into trouble, and dropped down to where I am now, is my secret.

Now, I absolutely decline to tell you a story. But, though I won't tell a story, I am ready to make a statement. A statement is a matter of fact; therefore the exact opposite of a story, which is a matter of fiction. What I am now going to tell you really happened to me.

I served my time—never mind in whose office; and I started in business for myself, in one of our English country towns—I decline stating which. I hadn't a quarter of the capital I ought to have had to begin with; and my friends in the neighbourhood were poor and useless enough, with one exception. That exception was Mr. Frank Gatcliffe, son of Mr. Gatcliffe, member for the county, the richest man and the proudest for many a mile round about our parts.—Stop a bit! you man in the corner there; you needn't perk up and look knowing. You won't trace any particulars by the name of Gatcliffe. I'm not bound to commit myself or anybody else by mentioning names. I have given you the first that came into my head.

Well! Mr. Frank was a staunch friend of

mine, and ready to recommend me whenever he got the chance. I had given him a little timely help—for a consideration, of course—in borrowing money at a fair rate of interest: in fact, I had saved him from the Jews. The money was borrowed while Mr. Frank was at college. He came back from college, and stopped at home a little while: and then there got spread about all our neighbourhood, a report that he had fallen in love, as the saying is, with his young sister's governess, and that his mind was made up to marry her.—What! you're at it again, my man in the corner! You want to know her name, don't you? What do you think of Smith?

Speaking as a lawyer, I consider Report, in a general way, to be a fool and a liar. But in this case report turned out to be something very different. Mr. Frank told me he was really in love, and said upon his honour (an absurd expression which young chaps of his age are always using) he was determined to marry Smith the governess—the sweet darling girl, as he called her; but I'm not sentimental, and I call her Smith the governess (with an eye, of course, to refreshing the memory of my friend in the corner). Mr. Frank's father, being as proud as Lucifer, said "No" as to marrying the governess, when Mr. Frank wanted him to say "Yes." He was a man of business, was old Gatcliffe, and he took the proper business course. He sent the governess away with a first-rate character and a spanking present; and then he looked about him to get something for Mr. Frank to do. While he was looking about, Mr. Frank bolted to London after the governess, who had nobody alive belonging to her to go to but an aunt—her father's sister. The aunt refuses to let Mr. Frank in without the squire's permission. Mr. Frank writes to his father, and says he will marry the girl as soon as he is of age, or shoot himself. Up to town comes the squire, and his wife, and his daughter; and a lot of sentimentality, not in the slightest degree material to the present statement, takes place among them; and the upshot of it is that old Gatcliffe is forced into withdrawing the word No, and substituting the word Yes.

I don't believe he would ever have done it, though, but for one lucky peculiarity in the case. The governess's father was a man of good family—pretty high as good as Gatcliffe's own. He had been in the army; had sold out; set up as a wine-merchant—failed—died: ditto his wife, as to the dying part of it. No relation in fact, left for the squire to make inquiries about but the father's sister; who had behaved, as old Gatcliffe said, like a thoroughbred gentlewoman in shutting the door against Mr. Frank in the first instance. So, to cut the matter short, things were at last made up pleasantly enough. The time was fixed for the wedding, and an announcement about it—Marriage in High Life and all

that—put into the county paper. There was a regular biography, besides, of the governor's father, so as to stop people from talking; a great flourish about his pedigree, and a long account of his services in the army; but not a word, mind ye, of his having turned wine-merchant afterwards. Oh, no—not a word about that! I knew it, though, for Mr. Frank told me. He hadn't a bit of pride about him. He introduced me to his future wife one day when I met them out walking, and asked me if I did not think he was a lucky fellow. I don't mind admitting that I did, and that I told him so. Ah! but she was one of my sort, was that governess. Stood, to the best of my recollection, five foot four. Good lissome figure, that looked as if it had never been boxed up in a pair of stays. Eyes that made me feel as if I was under a pretty stiff cross-examination the moment she looked at me. Fine red, fresh, kiss-and-come-again sort of lips. Cheeks and complexion—No, my man in the corner, you wouldn't identify her by her cheeks and complexion, if I drew you a picture of them this very moment. She has had a family of children since the time I'm talking of; and her cheeks are a trifle fatter and her complexion is a shade or two redder now, than when I first met her out walking with Mr. Frank.

The marriage was to take place on a Wednesday. I decline mentioning the year or the month. I had started as an attorney on my own account—say six weeks, more or less, and was sitting alone in my office on the Monday morning before the wedding-day, trying to see my way clear before me and not succeeding particularly well, when Mr. Frank suddenly bursts in, as white as a ghost that ever was painted, and says he's got the most dreadful case for me to advise on, and not an hour to lose in acting on my advice.

"Is this in the way of business, Mr. Frank?" says I, stopping him just as he was beginning to get sentimental. "Yes or no, Mr. Frank?" rapping my new office paper-knife on the table to pull him up short all the sooner.

"My dear fellow"—he was always familiar with me—"it's in the way of business, certainly; but friendship—"

I was obliged to pull him up short again and regularly examine him as if he had been in the witness-box, or he would have kept me talking to no purpose half the day.

"Now, Mr. Frank," said I, "I can't have any sentimentality mixed up with business matters. You please to stop talking, and let me ask questions. Answer in the fewest words you can use. Nod when nodding will do instead of words."

I fixed him with my eye for about three seconds, as he sat groaning and wriggling in his chair. When I'd done fixing him, I gave another rap with my paper-knife on to the

table to startle him up a bit. Then I went on.

"From what you have been stating up to the present time," says I, "I gather that you are in a scrape which is likely to interfere seriously with your marriage on Wednesday?" (He nodded, and I cut in again before he could say a word). "The scrape affects the young lady you are about to marry, and goes back to the period of a certain transaction in which her late father was engaged some years ago?" (He nods, and I cut in once more). "There is a party who turned up after seeing the announcement of your marriage in the paper, who is cognisant of what he oughtn't to know, and who is prepared to use his knowledge of the same, to the prejudice of the young lady and of your marriage, unless he receives a sum of money to quiet him? Very well. Now, first of all, Mr. Frank, state what you have been told by the young lady herself about the transaction of her late father. How did you first come to have any knowledge of it?"

"She was talking to me about her father one day, so tenderly and prettily, that she quite excited my interest about him," begins Mr. Frank; "and I asked her, among other things, what had occasioned his death. She said she believed it was distress of mind in the first instance; and added that this distress was connected with a shocking secret, which she and her mother had kept from everybody, but which she could not keep from me, because she was determined to begin her married life by having no secrets from her husband." Here Mr. Frank began to get sentimental again; and I pulled him up short once more with the paper knife.

"She told me," Mr. Frank went on, "that the great mistake of her father's life was his selling out of the army and taking to the wine trade. He had no talent for business; things went wrong with him from the first. His clerk, it was strongly suspected, cheated him—"

"Stop a bit," says I, "What was that suspected clerk's name?"

"Davager," says he.

"Davager," says I, making a note of it. "Go on, Mr. Frank."

"His affairs got more and more entangled," says Mr. Frank; "he was pressed for money in all directions; bankruptcy, and consequent dishonour (as he considered it) stared him in the face. His mind was so affected by his troubles that both his wife and daughter, towards the last, considered him to be hardly responsible for his own acts. In this state of desperation and misery, he—" Here Mr. Frank began to hesitate.

We have two ways in the law, of drawing evidence off nice and clear from an unwilling client or witness. We give him a fright or we treat him to a joke. I treated Mr. Frank to a joke.

"Ah!" says I. "I know what he did. He

had a signature to write; and by the most natural mistake in the world, he wrote another gentleman's name instead of his own—eh?"

"It was to a bill," says Mr. Frank, looking very crestfallen, instead of taking the joke. "His principal creditor wouldn't wait till he could raise the money, or the greater part of it. But he was resolved, if he sold off everything, to get the amount and repay——"

"Of course!" says I. "Drop that. The forgery was discovered. When?"

"Before even the first attempt was made to negotiate the bill. He had done the whole thing in the most absurdly and innocently wrong way. The person whose name he had used was a staunch friend of his, and a relation of his wife's: a good man as well as a rich one. He had influence with the chief creditor, and he used it nobly. He had a real affection for the unfortunate man's wife, and he proved it generously."

"Come to the point," says I. "What did he do? In a business way, what did he do?"

"He put the false bill into the fire, drew a bill of his own to replace it, and then—only then—told my dear girl and her mother all that had happened. Can you imagine anything nobler?" asks Mr. Frank.

"Speaking in my professional capacity, I can't imagine anything greener?" says I. "Where was the father? Off, I suppose?"

"Ill in bed," said Mr. Frank, colouring. "But, he mustered strength enough to write a contrite and grateful letter the same day, promising to prove himself worthy of the noble moderation and forgiveness extended to him, by selling off everything he possessed to repay his money debt. He did sell off everything, down to some old family pictures that were heirlooms; down to the little plate he had; down to the very tables and chairs that furnished his drawing room. Every farthing of the debt was paid; and he was left to begin the world again, with the kindest promises of help from the generous man who had forgiven him. It was too late. His crime of one rash moment—atoned for though it had been—preyed upon his mind. He became possessed with the idea that he had lowered himself for ever in the estimation of his wife and daughter, and——"

"He died," I cut in. "Yes, yes, we know that. Let's go back for a minute to the contrite and grateful letter that he wrote. My experience in the law, Mr. Frank, has convinced me that if everybody burnt everybody else's letters, half the Courts of Justice in this country might shut up shop. Do you happen to know whether the letter we are now speaking of contained anything like an avowal or confession of the forgery?"

"Of course it did," says he. "Could the writer express his contrition properly without making some such confession?"

"Quite easy, if he had been a lawyer,"

says I. "But never mind that; 'I'm going to make a guess,—a desperate guess, mind. Should I be altogether in error,' says I, 'if I thought that this letter had been stolen; and that the fingers of Mr. Davager, of suspicious commercial celebrity, might possibly be the fingers which took it?' says I."

"That is exactly what I tried to make you understand," cried Mr. Frank.

"How did he communicate that interesting fact to you?"

"He has not ventured into my presence. The scoundrel actually had the audacity——"

"Aha!" says I. "The young lady herself! Sharp practitioner, Mr. Davager."

"Early this morning, when she was walking alone in the shrubbery" Mr. Frank goes on, "he had the assurance to approach her, and to say that he had been watching his opportunity of getting a private interview for days past. He then showed her—actually showed her—her unfortunate father's letter; put into her hands another letter directed to me; bowed, and walked off; leaving her half dead with astonishment and terror!"

"It was much better for you that you were not," says I. "Have you got that other letter?"

He handed it to me. It was so extremely humorous and short, that I remember every word of it at this distance of time. It began in this way:

"To Francis Gatcliffe, Esq., Jun.—Sir,—I have an extremely curious autograph letter to sell. The price is a Five hundred pound note. The young lady to whom you are to be married on Wednesday will inform you of the nature of the letter, and the genuineness of the autograph. If you refuse to deal, I shall send a copy to the local paper, and shall wait on you, highly respected father with the original curiosity, on the afternoon of Tuesday next. Having come down here on family business, I have put up at the family hotel—being to be heard of at the Gatcliffe Arms. Your very obedient servant,

"ALFRED DAVAGER."

"A clever fellow, that," says I, putting the letter into my private drawer.

"Clever!" cries Mr. Frank, "he ought to be horsewhipped within an inch of his life. I would have done it myself, but she made me promise, before she told me a word of the matter, to come straight to you."

"That was one of the wisest promises you ever made," says I. "We can't afford to bully this fellow, whatever else we may do with him. Don't think I am saying anything libellous against your excellent father's character when I assert that if he saw the letter he would certainly insist on your marriage being put off, at the very least?"

"Feeling as my father does about my marriage, he would insist on its being dropped altogether, if he saw this letter," says Mr. Frank, with a groan. "But even that is not the worst of it. The generous, noble girl herself says, that if the letter appears in the paper, with all the unanswerable comments

this scoundrel would be sure to add to it, she would rather die than hold me to my engagement—even if my father would let me keep it." He was a weak young fellow, and ridiculously fond of her. I brought him back to business with another rap of the paper-knife.

"Hold up, Mr. Frank," says I. "I have a question or two more. Did you think of asking the young lady whether, to the best of her knowledge, this infernal letter was the only written evidence of the forgery now in existence?"

"Yes, I did think directly of asking her that," says he; "and she told me she was quite certain that there was no written evidence of the forgery, except that one letter."

"Will you give Mr. Davager his price for it?" says I.

"Yes," says Mr. Frank, as quick as lightning.

"Mr. Frank," says I, "you came here to get my help and advice in this extremely ticklish business, and you are ready, as I know, without asking, to remunerate me for all and any of my services at the usual professional rate. Now, I've made up my mind to act boldly—desperately, if you like—on the hit or miss—win-all-or-lose-all principle—in dealing with this matter. Here is my proposal. I'm going to try if I can't do Mr. Davager out of his letter. If I don't succeed before to-morrow afternoon, you hand him the money, and I charge you nothing for professional services. If I do succeed, I hand you the letter instead of Mr. Davager; and you give me the money, instead of giving it to him. It's a precious risk for me, but I'm ready to run it. You must pay your five hundred any way. What do you say to my plan? Is it, Yes—Mr. Frank—or, No?"

"Hang your questions!" cries Mr. Frank, jumping up; "you know it's Yes, ten thousand times over. Only you earn the money and——"

"And you will be too glad to give it to me. Very good. Now go home. Comfort the young lady—don't let Mr. Davager so much as set eyes on you—keep quiet—leave everything to me—and feel as certain as you please that all the letters in the world can't stop your being married on Wednesday." With these words I hustled him off out of the office; for I wanted to be left alone to make my mind up about what I should do.

The first thing, of course, was to have a look at the enemy. I wrote to Mr. Davager, telling him that I was privately appointed to arrange the little business-matter between himself and "another party" (no names!) on friendly terms; and begging him to call on me at his earliest convenience. (At the very beginning of the case, Mr. Davager bothered me. His answer was that it would not be convenient to him to call till between six and seven in the evening. In this way, you see, he con-

trived to make me lose several precious hours, at a time when minutes almost were of importance. I had nothing for it, but to be patient, and to give certain instructions, before Mr. Davager came, to my boy Tom.

There was never such a sharp boy of fourteen before, and there never will be again, as my boy, Tom. A spy to look after Mr. Davager was, of course, the first requisite in a case of this kind; and Tom was the smallest, quickest, quietest, sharpest, stealthiest little snake of a chap that ever dogged a gentleman's steps and kept cleverly out of range of a gentleman's eyes. I settled it with the boy that he was not to show at all, when Mr. Davager came; and that he was to wait to hear me ring the bell, when Mr. Davager left. If I rang twice, he was to show the gentleman out. If I rang once, he was to keep out of the way and follow the gentleman wherever he went, till he got back to the inn. Those were the only preparations I could make to begin with; being obliged to wait, and let myself be guided by what turned up.

About a quarter to seven my gentleman came. In the profession of the law we get somehow quite remarkably mixed up with ugly people, blackguard people, and dirty people. But far away the ugliest and dirtiest blackguard I ever saw in my life was Mr. Alfred Davager. He had greasy white hair and a mottled face. He was low in the forehead, fat in the stomach, hoarse in the voice, and weak in the legs. Both his eyes were bloodshot, and one was fixed in his head. He smelt of spirits, and carried a toothpick in his mouth. "How are you? I've just done dinner," says he—and he lights a cigar, sits down with his legs crossed, and winks at me.

I tried at first to take the measure of him in a wheedling, confidential way; but it was no good. I asked him in a facetious smiling manner, how he had got hold of the letter. He only told me in answer that he had been in the confidential employment of the writer of it, and that he had always been famous since infancy, for a sharp eye to his own interests. I paid him some compliments; but he was not to be flattered. I tried to make him lose his temper; but he kept it in spite of me. It ended in his driving me to my last resource—I made an attempt to frighten him.

"Before we say a word about the money," I began, "let me put a case, Mr. Davager. The pull you have on Mr. Francis Gatliffe is, that you can hinder his marriage on Wednesday. Now, suppose I have got a magistrate's warrant to apprehend you in my pocket? Suppose I have a constable to execute it in the next room? Suppose I bring you up to-morrow—the day before the marriage—charge you only generally with an attempt to extort money, and apply for a day's remand to complete the case? Suppose, as a suspicious stranger, you can't get bail in this town? Suppose——"

"Stop a bit," says Mr. Davager; "Suppose I should not be the greenest fool that ever stood in shoes? Suppose I should not carry the letter about me? Suppose I should have given a certain envelope to a certain friend of mine in a certain place in this town? Suppose the letter should be inside that envelope, directed to old Gatcliffe, side by side with a copy of the letter, directed to the editor of the local paper? Suppose my friend should be instructed to open the envelope, and take the letters to their right address, if I don't appear to claim them from him this evening? In short, my dear sir, suppose you were born yesterday, and suppose I wasn't?"—says Mr. Davager, and winks at me again.

He didn't take me by surprise, for I never expected that he had the letter about him. I made a pretence of being very much taken aback, and of being quite ready to give in. We settled our business about delivering the letter and handing over the money, in no time. I was to draw out a document, which he was to sign. He knew the document was stuff and nonsense just as well as I did; and told me I was only proposing it to swell my client's bill. Sharp as he was, he was wrong there. The document was not to be drawn out to gain money from Mr. Frank, but to gain time from Mr. Davager. It served me as an excuse to put off the payment of the five hundred pounds till three o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon. The Tuesday morning Mr. Davager said he should devote to his amusement, and asked me what sights were to be seen in the neighbourhood of the town. When I had told him, he pitched his toothpick into my grate—yawned—and went out.

I rang the bell once; waited till he had passed the window; and then looked after Tom. There was my jewel of a boy on the opposite side of the street, just setting his top going in the most playful manner possible. Mr. Davager walked away up the street, towards the market-place. Tom whipped his top up the street towards the market-place too.

In a quarter of an hour he came back, with all his evidence collected in a beautifully clear and compact state. Mr. Davager had walked to a public-house, just outside the town, in a lane leading to the high road. On a bench outside the public-house there sat a man smoking. He said "All right?" and gave a letter to Mr. Davager, who answered "All right," and walked back to the inn. In the hall he ordered hot rum and water, cigars, slippers, and a fire to be lit in his room. After that, he went up stairs, and Tom came away.

I now saw my road clear before me—not very far on, but still clear. I had housed the letter, in all probability for that night, at the Gatcliffe Arms. After tipping Tom, I gave him directions to play about the door of the inn, and refresh himself, when he was

tired, at the tart-shop opposite—eating as much as he pleased, on the understanding that he crammed all the time with his eye on the window. If Mr. Davager went out or Mr. Davager's friend called on him, Tom was to let me know. He was also to take a little note from me to the head chambermaid—an old friend of mine—asking her to step over to my office, on a private matter of business, as soon as her work was done for that night. After settling these little matters, having half an hour to spare, I turned to and did myself a bloater at the office-fire, and had a drop of gin and water hot, and felt comparatively happy.

When the head chambermaid came, it turned out, as good luck would have it, that Mr. Davager had offended her. I no sooner mentioned him than she flew into a passion; and when I added, by way of clinching the matter, that I was retained to defend the interests of a very beautiful and deserving young lady (name not referred to, of course) against the most cruel underhand treachery on the part of Mr. Davager, the head chambermaid was ready to go any lengths that she could safely to serve my cause. In few words, I discovered that Boots was to call Mr. Davager at eight the next morning, and was to take his clothes downstairs to brush as usual. If Mr. D. had not emptied his own pockets overnight, we arranged that Boots was to forget to empty them for him, and was to bring the clothes downstairs just as he found them. If Mr. D.'s pockets were emptied, then, of course, it would be necessary to transfer the searching process to Mr. D.'s room. Under any circumstances, I was certain of the head chambermaid; and under any circumstances also, the head chambermaid was certain of Boots.

I waited till Tom came home, looking very puffy and bilious about the face; but as to his intellects, if anything, rather sharper than ever. His report was uncommonly short and pleasant. The inn was shutting up; Mr. Davager was going to bed in rather a drunken condition; Mr. Davager's friend had never appeared. I sent Tom (properly instructed) about keeping our man in view all the next morning) to his shake-down behind the office desk, where I heard him hiccupping half the night, as boys will, when over-excited and too full of tarts.

At half-past seven next morning, I slipped quietly into Boots's pantry. Down came the clothes. No pockets in trousers. Waistcoat pockets empty. Coat pockets with something in them. First, handkerchief; secondly, bunch of keys; thirdly, cigar-case; fourthly, pocket-book. Of course I wasn't such a fool as to expect to find the letter there; but I opened the pocket-book with a certain curiosity, notwithstanding.

Nothing in the two pockets of the book but some old advertisements cut out of newspapers, a lock of hair tied round with a dirty

bit of ribbon, a circular letter about a loan society, and some copies of verses not likely to suit any company that was not of an extremely wicked description. On the leaves of the pocket-book, people's addresses scrawled in pencil, and bets jotted down in red ink. On one leaf, by itself, this queer inscription: "MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS." I understood everything but those words and figures; so of course I copied them out into my own book. Then I waited in the pantry, till Boots had brushed the clothes and had taken them upstairs. His report, when he came down was, that Mr. D. had asked if it was a fine morning. Being told that it was, he had ordered breakfast at nine, and a saddle-horse to be at the door at ten, to take him to Grimwith Abbey—one of the sights in our neighbourhood which I had told him of the evening before.

"I'll be here, coming in by the back way at half-past ten," says I to the head chambermaid. "To take the responsibility of making Mr. Davager's bed off your hands for this morning only. I want to hire Sam for the morning. Put it down in the order-book that he's to be brought round to my office at ten."

Sam was a pony, and I'd made up my mind that it would be beneficial to Tom's health, after the tarts, if he took a constitutional airing on a nice hard saddle in the direction of Grimwith Abbey.

"Anything else," says the head chambermaid.

"Only one more favour," says I. "Would my boy Tom be very much in the way if he came, from now till ten, to help with the boots and shoes, and stood at his work close by this window which looks out on the staircase?"

"Not a bit," says the head chambermaid.

"Thank you," says I; and stepped back to my office directly.

When I had sent Tom off to help with the boots and shoes, I reviewed the whole case exactly as it stood at that time. There were three things Mr. Davager might do with the letter. He might give it to his friend again before ten—in which case, Tom would most likely see the said friend on the stairs. He might take it to his friend, or to some other friend, after ten—in which case, Tom was ready to follow him on Sam the pony. And, lastly, he might leave it hidden somewhere in his room, & the inn—in which case, I was all ready for him with a search-warrant of my own granting, under favour always of my friend the head chambermaid. So far I had my business arrangements all gathered up nice and compact in my own hands. Only two things bothered me: the terrible shortness of the time at my disposal, in case I failed in my first experiments for getting hold of the letter, and that queer inscription which I had copied out of the pocket-book.

"MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS." It was the measurement, most likely, of something, and he was afraid of forgetting it; therefore, it was something important. Query—something about himself? Say "5" (inches) "along"—he doesn't wear a wig. Say "5" (feet) "along"—it can't be coat, waistcoat, trousers, or underclothing. Say "5" (yards) "along"—it can't be anything about himself, unless he wears round his body the rope that he's sure to be hanged with one of these days. Then it is *not* something about himself. What do I know of that is important to him besides? I know of nothing but the Letter. Can the memorandum be connected with that? Say, yes. What do "5 along" and "4 across" mean then? The measurement of something he carries about with him?—or the measurement of something in his room? I could get, pretty satisfactorily to myself as far as that; but I could get no further.

Tom came back to the office, and reported him mounted for his ride. His friend had never appeared. I sent the boy off, with his proper instructions, on Sam's back—wrote an encouraging letter to Mr. Frank to keep him quiet—then slipped into the inn by the back way a little before half-past ten. The head chambermaid gave me a signal when the landing was clear. I got into his room without a soul but her seeing me, and locked the door immediately. The case was to a certain extent, simplified now. Either Mr. Davager had hidden out with the letter about him, or he had left it in some safe hiding-place in his room. I suspected it to be in his room, for a reason that will a little astonish you—his trunk, his dressing-case, and all the drawers and cupboards were left open. I knew my customer, and I thought this extraordinary carelessness on his part rather suspicious.

Mr. Davager had taken one of the best bedrooms at the Gatliffe Arms. Floor carpeted all over, walls beautifully papered, four-poster, and general furniture first-rate. I searched, to begin with, on the usual plan, examining every thing in every possible way, and taking more than an hour about it. No discovery. Then I pulled out a carpenter's rule which I had brought with me. Was there anything in the room which—either in inches, feet, or yards—answered to "5 along" and "4 across"? Nothing. I put the rule back in my pocket—measurement was no good evidently. Was there anything in the room that would count up to 5 one way and 4 another, seeing that nothing would measure up to it? I had got obstinately persuaded by this time that the letter must be in the room—principally because of the trouble I had had in looking after it. And persuading myself of that, I took it into my head next, just as obstinately, that "5 along" and "4 across" must be the right clue to find the letter by—principally because I hadn't left myself, after all my searching

and thinking, even so much as the vestige of another guide to go by. "5 along"—where could I count five along the room, in any part of it!

Not on the paper. The pattern there was pillars of trellis-work and flowers, enclosing a plain green ground—only four pillars along the wall and only two across. The furniture? There were not five chairs, or five separate pieces of any furniture in the room altogether. The fringes that hung from the cornices of the bed? Plenty of them, at any rate! Up I jumped on the counterpane, with my penknife in my hand. Every way that "5 along" and "4 across" could be reckoned on those unlucky fringes, I reckoned on them—probed with my penknife—scratched with my nails—crunched with my fingers. No use; not a sign of a letter; and the time was getting on—oh, Lord! how the time did get on in Mr. Davager's room that morning.

I jumped down from the bed, so desperate at my ill-luck that I hardly cared whether anybody heard me or not. Quite a little cloud of dust rose at my feet as they thumped on the carpet. "Hallo!" thought I; "my friend the head chambermaid takes it easy here. Nice state for a carpet to be in, in one of the best bedrooms at the Gatcliffe Arms." Carpet! I had been jumping up on the bed, and staring up at the walls, but I had never so much as given a glance down at the carpet. Think of me pretending to be a lawyer, and not knowing how to look low enough!

The carpet! It had been a stout article in its time; had evidently begun in a drawing-room; then descended to a coffee-room; then gone upstairs altogether to a bedroom. The ground was brown, and the pattern was bunches of leaves and roses speckled over the ground at regular distances. I reckoned up the bunches. Ten along the room—eight across it. When I had stepped out five one way and four the other, and was down on my knees on the centre bunch, as true as I sit on this bench, I could hear my own heart beating so loud that it quite frightened me.

I looked narrowly all over the bunch, and I felt all over it with the ends of my fingers; and nothing came of that. Then I scraped it over slowly and gently with my nails. My second finger-nail stuck a little at one place. I parted the pile of the carpet over that place, and saw a thin slit, which had been hidden by the pile being smoothed over it—a slit about half an inch long, with a little end of brown thread, exactly the colour of the carpet-ground, sticking out about a quarter of an inch from the middle of it. Just as I laid hold of the thread gently, I heard a footstep outside the door.

It was only the head chambermaid. "Hav'n't you done yet?" she whispers.

"Give me two minutes," says I; "and don't let anybody come near the door—what-ever you do, don't let anybody startle me again by coming near the door."

I took a little pull at the thread, and heard something rustle. I took a longer pull, and out came a piece of paper, rolled up tight like those candle-lighters that the ladies make. I unrolled it—and, by George! gentlemen all, there was the letter!

The original letter!—I knew it by the colour of the ink. The letter that was worth five hundred pound to me! It was all I could do to keep myself at first from throwing my hat into the air, and hooraying like mad. I had to take a chair and sit quiet in it for a minute or two, before I could cool myself down to my proper business level. I knew that I was safely down again when I found myself pondering how to let Mr. Davager know that he had been done by the innocent country attorney, after all.

It was not long before a nice little irritating plan occurred to me. I tore a blank leaf out of my pocket-book, wrote on it with my pencil "Change for a five hundred pound note," folded up the paper, tied the thread to it, poked it back into the hiding-place, smoothed over the pile of the carpet, and—as everybody in this place guesses before I can tell them—bolted off to Mr. Frank. He, in his turn, bolted off to show the letter to the young lady, who first certified to its genuineness, then dropped it into the fire, and then took the initiative for the first time since her marriage engagement, by flinging her arms round his neck, kissing him with all her might, and going into hysterics in his arms. So at least Mr. Frank told me; but that's not evidence. It is evidence, however, that I saw them married with my own eyes on the Wednesday; and that while they went off in a carriage and four to spend the honeymoon, I went off on my own legs to open a credit at the Town and County Bank with a five hundred pound note in my pocket.

As to Mr. Davager, I can tell you nothing about him, except what is derived from hearsay evidence, which is always unsatisfactory evidence, even in a lawyer's mouth.

My boy, Tom, although twice kicked off by Sam the pony, never lost hold of the bridle, and kept his man in sight from first to last. He had nothing particular to report, except that on the way out to the Abbey Mr. Davager had stopped at the public-house, had spoken a word or two to his friend of the night before, and had handed him what looked like a bit of paper. This was no doubt a clue to the thread that held the letter, to be used in case of accidents. In every other respect Mr. D. had ridden out and ridden in like an ordinary sight-seer. Tom reported him to me as having dismounted at the hotel about two. At half-past, I locked my office door, nailed a card under the knocker with "not at home till to-morrow" written on it, and retired to a friend's house a mile or so out of the town for the rest of the day.

Mr. Davager left the Gatcliffe Arms that night with his best clothes on his back,

and with all the valuable contents of his dressing-case in his pockets. I am not in a condition to state whether he ever went through the form of asking for his bill or not; but I can positively testify that he never paid it, and that the effects left in his bedroom did not pay it either. When I add to these fragments of evidence, that he and I have never met (luckily for me), since I jockeyed him out of his bank note, I have about fulfilled my implied contract as maker of a statement, with the present company as hearers of a statement.

THE FIFTH POOR TRAVELLER.

Do you know—the journeyman watch-maker from Geneva began—do you know those long straight lines of French country, over which I have often walked? Do you know those rivers so long, so uniform in breadth, so dully gray in hue, that in despair at their regularity, you momentarily libel nature as being only a grand canal commissioner after all? Do you know the long funereal rows of poplars, or dreary parallelograms of osiers, that fringe those river banks; the long white roads, hedgeless, but, oh! so dismally ditchful; the long, low stone walls; the long farmhouses, without a spark of the robust, leafy, cheerful life of the English homesteads; the long fields, scarcely ever-green, but of an ashen tone, wearily furrowed, as though the earth had grown old and was beginning to show the crow's feet; the long, interminable gray French landscape? The sky itself seems longer than it ought to be; and the clouds stretch away to goodness knows where in long low banks, as if the heavens had been ruled with a parallel. If a vehicle passes you it is only a woefully long diligence, lengthened yellow ugliness long drawn out, with a seemingly endless team of horses, and a long, stifling cloud of dust behind it; a driver for the wheelers with a whip seven times as long as it ought to be; and a p stilion for the leaders with boots long enough for seven-leaguers. His oaths are long; the horses' manes are long; their tails are so long that they are obliged to have them tied up with straw. The stages are long, the journey long, the fares long—the whole onitudinal carriage leaves a long melancholy jingle of bells behind it.

Yes: French scenery is very lengthy; so I settled in my mind at least, as I walked with long strides along the white French road. A longer me—my shadow—walked before me, bending its back and drooping its arms, and angularising its elongated leg like drowsy compasses. The shadow looked tired! I felt so. I had been oppressed by length all day. I had passed a long procession—some hundreds of boys in gray great coats and red trousers: soldiers. I had found their guns and bayonets too long, their coats disproportionately lengthy; the

moustaches of their officers ridiculously elongated. There was no end of them—their rolling drums, baggage waggons, and led horses. I had passed a team of bullocks ploughing: they looked as long as the lane that hath no turning. A long man followed them smoking a long pipe. A wretched pig I saw, too—a long, lean, bristly, lanky-legged monstrosity, without even a curly tail, for his tail was long and pendent; a miserable pig, half-snouted greyhound, half-abashed weaz, whole hog, and an eyesore to me. I was a long way from home. I had the spleen. I wanted something short—not to drink, but a short break in the long landscape, a house, a knoll, a clump of trees—anything to relieve this long purgatory.

Whenever I feel inclined to take a more than ordinarily dismal view of things, I find it expedient to take a pipe of tobacco instead. As I wanted to rest, however, as well as smoke, I had to walk another long mile. When I descried a house, in front thereof was a huge felled tree, and on the tree I sat and lighted my pipe. The day was of no particular character whatever: neither wet nor dry, cold nor hot—neither springy, summery, autumnal, nor wintry.

The house I was sitting opposite to, might have been one of public entertainment (for it was a cabaret) if there had been any public in the neighbourhood to be entertained, which (myself excepted) I considered doubtful. It seemed to me as if Bacchus, roving about on the loose, had dropped a stray tub here on the solitary road, and no longer coming that way, the tub itself had gone to decay—had become unhooped mouldy, leaky. I declare that, saving a certain fanciful resemblance to the barrel on which the god of wine is generally supposed to take horse exercise, the house had no more shape than a lump of cheese that one might dig hap-hazard from a soft double Gloucester. The windows were patches and the doorway had evidently been made subsequently to the erection of the building, and looked like an excrescence as it was. The top of the house had been pelted with mud, thatch, tiles, and slates, rather than roofed; and a top room jutted out laterally from one of the walls, supported beneath by crazy uprights, like a poor relation clinging to a genteel kinsman nearly as poor. The walls had been plastered once, but the plaster had peeled off in places, and mud and wattles peeped through like a beggar's bare knee through his torn trousers. An anomalous wooden ruin, that might have been a barrel in the beginning, then a dog-kennel, then a dust-bin, then a hen-coop, seemed fast approximating (eked out by some rotten palings and half a deal box) to a pigsty: perhaps my enemy the long pig with the pendent tail lived there when he was at home. A lively old birch-broom, senile but twiggy, thriving under a kindly manure of broken bottles and

woodashes, was the only apology for trees, hedges, or vegetation generally, visible. If wood was deficient, however, there was plenty of water. Behind the house, where it had been apparently raining for some years, a highly respectable puddle, as far as mud and stagnation went, had formed, and, on the surface of it drifted a solitary, purposeless, soleless old shoe, and one dismal duck which no amount of green peas would have ever persuaded me to eat. There was a chimney to the house, but not in the proper place, of course: it came out of one of the walls, close to the impromptu pigstye, in the shape of a rusty, battered iron funnel. There had never been anything to speak of done in the way of painting to the house; only some erratic journeyman painter passing that way had tried his brushes in red, green, and yellow smudges on the wall; had commenced dead colouring one of the window sills; and had then given it up as a bad job. Some pretentious announcements relative to "Good wines and liquors;" and "Il y a un billard" there had been once above the door, but the rain had washed out some of the letters, and the smoke had obscured others, and the plaster had peeled off from beneath more; and some, perhaps, the writer had never finished; so the inscriptions were a mere wandering piece of idiocy now. If anything were wanted to complete the general wretchedness of this house of dismal appearances it would have been found in the presence of a ghostly set of ninepins that Rip Van Winkle might have played with.

All these things were not calculated to inspire cheerfulness. I continued smoking, however, and thought that by and by I would enter the cabaret, and see if there were any live people there; which appeared unlikely.

All at once, there came out to me from the house a little man. It is not at all derogating from his manhood to state that he was also a little boy, of perhaps eight years old; but in look, in eye, in weird fur-cap, in pea-coat, blue canvas trowsers, and sabots, he was at least thirty-seven years of age. He had a remarkable way, too, of stroking his chin with his hand. He looked at me long and fully, but without the slightest rudeness, or intrusive curiosity; then sitting by my side on the great felled tree he smoked a mental pipe (so it appeared to me) while I smoked a material one. Once, I think, he softly felt the texture of my coat; but I did not turn my head, and pretended not to notice.

We were getting on thus, very sociably together, without saying a word, when, having finished my pipe I replaced it in my pouch, and began to remove a little of the superfluous dust from my boots. My pulverous appearance was the cue for the little man to address himself to speech.

"I see," said he, gravely, "you are one of those poor travellers whom mamma tells us

we are to take such care of. Attend, attend, I will do your affair for you in a moment."

He trotted across to the cabaret, and after a lapse of two or three minutes returned with a tremendous hunch of bread, a cube of cheese—which smelt, as the Americans say, rather loud, but was excellently well-tasted—and an anomalous sort of vessel that was neither a jug, a mug, a cup, a glass, nor a pint-pot, but partook of the characteristics of all—full of Macon wine.

"This is Friday," added the little man, "and meagre day, else should you be regaled with sausage—and of Lyons—of which we have as long as that;" saying which he extended his little arms to perhaps half a yard's distance one from the other.

I did not care to inform the little man that I was of a persuasion that did not forbid the eating of sausages on Fridays. I ate the bread and cheese and drank the wine, all of which were very good and very palatable, very contentedly: the little man sitting by, the while, nursing one of his short legs, and talking to himself softly.

When I had finished I lighted another pipe, and went in for conversation with the little man. We soon exhausted the ordinary topics of conversation, such as the weather, the distance from the last town, and the distance to the next. I found that the little man's forte was interrogatory, and let him have his swing that way.

"You come from a long way?" he asked.

"A long way," I answered. "From beyond the Sous-prefecture, beyond Nantes, beyond Brest and L'Orient."

"But from a town, always? You come from a town where there are a great many people, and where they make wheels?"

I answered that I came from a large town, and that I had no doubt, though I had no personal experience in the matter, that wheels were made there.

"And cannot you make wheels?"

I told him I was not a wheelwright; I only made the wheels of watches, which were not the wheels he meant.

"Because," the little man went on to say, softly, and more to himself than to me, "mamma said he liked more to live in towns, where there were many people, and M. le Curé said that wherever wheels were made he could gain his bread."

I could not make much of this statement, so I puffed away at my pipe, and listened.

"By the way," my small but elderly companion remarked, "would you have any objection to my bringing my sister to you?"

The more I saw of so original a family the better, I thought; so I told him I should be delighted to see his sister.

He crossed over to the cabaret again, and almost immediately afterwards returned, leading a little maid.

She seemed about a year younger, or a year older than her brother. I could not

tell which. It did not matter which. She was very fair, and her auburn locks were confined beneath a little prim blue cap. Mittens, a striped woollen shirt, a smart white chemisette, blue hose, and trim little sabots, all these had the little maid. She had a little chain and golden cross; a pair of scissors hanging by a string to her girdle, a black tabinet apron, and a little silver ring on the forefinger of her left hand. Her eyes were very blue, but they could not see my dusty boots, my pipe, and three days' beard. They could not see the great felled tree, her brother in his pea-coat, the sky, the sun going down beyond the long straight banks of trees. They had never seen any of these things. The little maid was blind.

She had known all about me, however, as far as the boots, the pipe, the dust, the bread and cheese, my having come a long way, and not being a wheelwright went, long since. At least, she seemed quite au fait on general topics connected with my social standing, or rather sitting, on the tree: and taking a seat on one side of me: her brother, the little man, on the other, the two little children began to chatter most delightfully.

Mamma worked in the fields. In her own fields. She had three fields. Fields large as that (distance measured by little maid's arms after the manner of her brother in reference to the sausage question). Papa made wheels. They loved him very much, but he beat mamma, and drank wine by cannons. When he was between two wines (that is, drunk), he knocked Lili's head against the wall (Lili was the little man). When M. le Curé tried to bring him to a sense of the moral, he laughed at his nose. He was a farceur was Papa. He made beautiful wheels, and earned money like that (arm measurement again), except when he went weddingising (nocer), when he always came back between two wines, and between the two fell to the ground. Papa went away, a long time, a very long time ago. Before the white calf at the farm was born. Before André drew the bad number in the conscription, and went away to Africa. Before Lili had his grand malady (little man looked a hundred years old with the conscious experience of a grand malady. What was it? Elephantiasis, spasmodic neuralgia? Something wonderful, with a long name, I am sure). Papa sold the brown horse, and the great bed in oak, before he went away. He also brised Mamma's head with a bottle, previous to his departure. He was coming back some day. He was sure to come back. M. le Curé said no, and that he was a worth nothing, but mamma said, Yes, and cried; "though for my part," concluded the little maid, when between herself and brother she had told me all this, "I think that poor papa never will come back, but he has gone away among those Bedouin Turks, who are so méchants, and that they have eaten him up."

The little blind fairy made this statement with an air of such positive yet mild conviction, crossing her mites of hands in her lap as she did so, that for the moment I would have no more attempted to question the prevalence of cannibalism in Constantinople than to deny the existence of the setting sun.

While these odd little people were thus entertaining me, Heaven knows where my thoughts were wandering. This strange life they led. The mother away at work; the drunken wheelwright father a fugitive (he must have been an awful ruffian); and, strangest of all strange phases, that these two little ones should be left to keep a public-house! I thought of all these things, and then my thoughts came back to, and centred themselves in the weird little figure of the blind girl beside me. It was but a poor little blind girl in a blue petticoat and sabots; yet so exquisitely regular were the features, so golden the hair, so firm and smooth, and white—not marble, not wax, not ivory, yet partaking of all three the complexion, so symmetrical every line, and so gloriously harmonious the whole combination of lines, that the little maid might have been taken then and there as she sat, popped in a frame, with "Raffaelle pinxit," in the corner, and purchased on the nail for five thousand guineas.

I could not help noticing from time to time, during our conversation, that the little man in the pea-coat turned aside to whisper somewhat mysteriously to his sister, and then looked at me more mysteriously still. He appeared to have something on his mind, and after a nod of apparent acquiescence on the part of the little blind girl, it soon came out what the something was.

"My sister and I," said this small person, "hope that you will not be offended with us, but would you have any objection to show us your tongue?"

This was, emphatically, a startler. Could the little man be a physician as well as a publican? I did as he asked me; though I am afraid I looked very foolish, and shut my eyes as I thrust forth the member he desired to inspect. He appeared highly gratified with the sight of my tongue, communicating the results of his observation thereof to his sister, who clapped her hands, and seemed much pleased. Then he condescended to explain.

"You see," said he, "that you told us you came from a distant country; that is well seen, for though you speak French like a little sheep, you do not speak it with the same tongue that we do."

My experience of the court-martial scene in Black-eyed Susan, had taught me that it was possible to play the fiddle like an angel, but this was the first time I had ever heard of a grown man talking like a little sheep. I took it as a compliment

however (whether I was right or wrong in doing so is questionable), and waited to hear more.

"And my sister says that the reason why all strangers from far countries cannot speak as we do, is, because they have a dark line right down their tongues. Now you must have a line down your tongue, though I am not tall enough to see it!"

The creed of this valiant little fellow in respect to lines and tongues had evidently been built, long since, upon a rock of ages of loving faith in what his sister had told him. Besides, how do I know? I never saw my tongue except in a looking-glass, and that may have been false. My tongue may have five hundred lines crossing it at every imaginable angle, for aught I know.

So, we three, oddly assorted trio went chattering on, till the shadows warned me that twilight was fast approaching, and that I had two miles to walk to the town where I had appointed to sleep. Remembering then, that the little man had "done my affair for me," in an early stage of our interview in the way of bread and cheese and wine, and not choosing to be really the poor traveller I seemed, I drew out a five-franc piece, and proffered payment.

Both the children refused the coin; and the little maid said gravely, "Mamma said that we were always to take care of poor travellers. What we have given you is pour l'amour de Dieu,—for God's sake."

I tried to force some trifle on them as a gift, but they would have none of my coin. Seeing then that I looked somewhat disappointed, the little man, like a profound diplomatist as he was, smoothed away the difficulty in a moment.

"If you like to go as far as you can see to the right, towards the town," he said, "you will find a blind old woman, playing upon a flageolet, and sitting at a cake-stall by the way side. And if you like to buy us some gingerbread:—for three sous she will give you—oh! like that!" For the last time in this history he extended his arms in sign of measurement.

I went as far as I could see, which was not far, and found the blind old woman playing on a flageolet, and not seeing at all. Of her, did I purchase gingerbread, with brave white almonds in it: following my own notions of measurement, I may hint, in respect to the number of sous-worth.

Bringing it back to the children, I took them up, and kissed them and bade them good-bye. Then I left them to the gingerbread and the desolate cabaret, until mamma should return from the fields, and that famous domestic institution, the "soupe," of which frequent mention had already been made during our intercourse, should be ready.

I have never seen them since; I shall never see them again; but, if it ever be my lot to

be no longer solitary, I pray that I may have a boy and girl, as wise, and good, and innocent as I am sure those little children were.

THE SIXTH POOR TRAVELLER.

Was the little widow. She had been sitting by herself in the darkest corner of the room all this time; her pale face often turned anxiously toward the door, and her hollow eyes watching restlessly, as if she expected some one to appear. She was very quiet, very grateful for any little kindness, very meek in the midst of her wildness. There was a strained expression in her eyes, and a certain excited air about her altogether, that was very near insanity; it seemed as if she had once been terrified by some sudden shock, to the verge of madness.

When her turn came to speak, she began in a low voice—her eyes still glancing to the door—and spoke as if to herself rather than to the rest of us; speaking low but rapidly—somewhat like a somnambule repeating a lesson:

They advised me not to marry him (she began). They told me he was wild—unprincipled—bad; but I did not care for what they said. I loved him and I disbelieved them. I never thought about his goodness—I only knew that he was beautiful and gifted beyond all that I had ever met with in our narrow society. I loved him, with no passing school-girl fancy, but with my whole heart—my whole soul. I had no life, no joy, no hope without him, and heaven would have been no heaven to me if he had not been there. I say all this, simply to show what a madness of devotion mine was.

My dear mother was very kind to me throughout. She had loved my father, I believe, almost to the same extent; so that she could sympathise with me even while discouraging. She told me that I was wrong and foolish, and that I should repent: but I kissed away the painful lines between her eyes, and made her smile when I tried to prove to her that love was better than prudence. So we married: not so much without the consent as against the wish of my family; and even that wish withheld in sorrow and in love. I remember all this now, and see the true proportions of everything; then, I was blinded by my passions, and understood nothing.

We went away to our pretty, bright home in one of the neighbourhoods of London, near a park. We lived there for many months—I in a state of intoxication rather than of earthly happiness, and he was happy, too, then, for I am sure he was innocent, and I know he loved me. Oh, dreams—dreams!

I did not know my husband's profession. He was always busy and often absent; but he never told me what he did. There had been

no settlements either, when I married. He said he had a conscientious scruple against them; that they were insulting to a man's honour and degrading to any husband. This was one of the reasons why, at home, they did not wish me to marry him. But I was only glad to be able to show him how I trusted him, by meeting his wishes and refusing, on my own account, to accept the legal protection of settlements. It was such a pride to me to sacrifice all to him. Thus I knew nothing of his real life—his pursuits or his fortunes. I never asked him any questions, as much from indifference to everything but his love as from a wifely blindness of trust. When he came home at night, sometimes very gay, singing opera songs, and calling me his little Medora, as he used when in a good humour, I was gay too, and grateful. And when he came home moody and irritable—which he used to do, often, after we had been married about three months, once even threatening to strike me, with that fearful glare in his eyes I remember so well, and used to see so often afterwards—then I was patient and silent, and never attempted even to take his hand or kiss his forehead when he bade me be still and not interrupt him. He was my law, and his approbation the sunshine of my life; so that my very obedience was selfishness; for my only joy was to see him happy, and my only duty to obey him.

My sister came to visit us. My husband had seen very little of her before our marriage; for she had often been from home when he was with us, down at Hurst Farm—that was the name of my dear mother's place—and I had always fancied they had not liked even the little they had seen of each other. Ellen was never loud or importunate in her opposition. I knew that she did not like the marriage, but she did not interfere. I remember quite well the only time she spoke openly to me on the subject how she flung herself at my knees, with a passion very rare in her, beseeching me to pause and reflect, as if I had sold myself to my ruin when I promised to be Harry's wife. How she prayed! Poor Ellen! I can see her now, with her heavy, uncured hair falling on her neck as she knelt half undressed, her large eyes full of agony and supplication, like a martyred saint praying. Poor Ellen! I thought her prejudiced then; and this unspoken injustice has lain like a heavy crime on my heart ever since: for I know that I judged her wrongfully, and that I was ungrateful for her love.

She came to see us. This was about a year and a half after I married. She was more beautiful than ever, but somewhat sterner, as well as sadder. She was tall, strong in person, and dignified in manner. There was a certain manly character in her beauty, as well as in her mind, that made one respect and fear her

too a little. I do not mean that she was masculine, or hard, or coarse: she was a true woman in grace and gentleness; but she was braver than women in general. She had more self-reliance, was more resolute and steadfast, and infinitely less impulsive, and was more active and powerful in body.

My husband was very kind to her. He paid her great attention; and sometimes I half perceived that he liked her almost better than he liked me—he used to look at her so often: but with such a strange expression in his eyes! I never could quite make it out, whether it was love or hate. Certainly, after she came his manner changed towards me. I was not jealous. I did not suspect this change from any small feeling of wounded self-love, or from any envy of my sister; but I saw it—I felt it in my heart—yet without connecting it with Ellen in any way. I knew that he no longer loved me as he used to do, but I did not think he loved her; at least, not with the same kind of love. I used to be surprised at Ellen's conduct to him. She was more than cold; she was passionately rude and unkind; not so much when I was there as when I was away. For I used to hear her voice speaking in those deep indignant tones that are worse to bear than the harshest scream of passion; and sometimes I used to hear hard words—he speaking at the first soft and pleadingly, often to end in a terrible burst of anger and imprecation. I could not understand why they quarrelled. There was a mystery between them that I did not know of; and I did not like to ask them, for I was afraid of them both—as much afraid of Ellen as of my husband—and I felt like a reed between them—as if I should have been crushed beneath any storm I might chance to wake up. So, I was silent—suffering alone, and bearing a cheerful face so far as I could.

Ellen wanted me to return home with her. Soon after she came, and soon after I heard the first dispute between them, she urged me to go back to Hurst Farm; at once, and for a long time. Weak as I am by nature, it has always been a marvel to me since, how strong I was where my love for my husband was concerned. It seemed impossible for me to yield to any pressure against him. I believe now that a very angel could not have turned me from him!

At last she said to me in a low voice: "Mary, this is madness!—it is almost sinful! Can you not see—can you not hear?" And then she stopped and would say no more, though I urged her to tell me what she meant. For this terrible mystery began to weigh on me painfully, and, for all that I trembled so much to fathom it, I had begun to feel that any truth would be better than such a life of dread. I seemed to be living among shadows; my very husband and sister not real, for their real lives were hidden from me. But I was too timid to insist on

an explanation, and so things went on in their old way.

In one respect only, changing still more painfully, still more markedly; in my husband's conduct to me. He was like another creature altogether to me now, he was so altered. He seldom spoke to me at all, and he never spoke kindly. All that I did annoyed him, all that I said irritated him; and once (the little widow covered her face with her hands and shuddered) he spurned me with his foot and cursed me, one night in our own room, when I knelt weeping before him, supplicating him for pity's sake to tell me how I had offended him. But I said to myself that he was tired, annoyed, and that it was irritating to see a loving woman's tears; and so I excused him, as oftentimes before, and went on loving him all the same—God forgive me for my idolatry!

Things had been very bad of late between Ellen and my husband. But the character of their discord was changed. Instead of reproaching, they watched each other incessantly. They put me in mind of fencers—my husband on the defensive.

"Mary," said my sister to me suddenly, coming to the sofa where I was sitting embroidering my poor baby's cap. "What does your Harry do in life? What is his profession?"

She fixed her eyes on me earnestly.

"I do not know, darling," I answered, vaguely. "He has no profession that I know of."

"But what fortune has he, then? Did he not tell you what his income was, and how obtained, when he married? To us, he said only that he had so much a year—a thousand a year; and he would say no more. But, has he not been more explicit with you?"

"No," I answered, considering; for, indeed, I had never thought of this. I had trusted so blindly to him in everything that it would have seemed to me, a profound insult to have even asked of his affairs. "No, he never told me anything about his fortune, Ellen. He gives me money when I want it, and is always generous. He seems to have plenty; whenever it is asked for, he has it by him, and gives me even more than I require."

Still her eyes kept looking at me in that strange manner. "And this is all you know?"

"Yes—all. What more should I wish to know? Is he not the husband, and has he not absolute right over everything? I have no business to interfere." The words sound harsher now than they did then, for I spoke lovingly.

Ellen touched the little cap I held. "Does not this make you anxious?" she said. "Can you not fear as a mother, even while you love as a wife?"

"Fear, darling! Why? What should I fear, or whom? What is there, Ellen, on your

heart?" I then added passionately. "Tell me at once; for I know that you have some terrible secret concealed from me; and I would rather know anything—whatever it may be—than live on, longer, in this kind of suspense and anguish! It is too much for me to bear, Ellen."

She took my hands. "Have you strength?" she said, earnestly. "Could you really bear the truth?" Then seeing my distress, for I had fallen into a kind of hysterical fit—I was very delicate then—she shook her head in despair, and, letting my hands fall heavily on my lap, said in an under tone, "No, no! she is too weak—too childish!" Then she went upstairs abruptly; and I heard her walking about her own room for nearly an hour after, in long steady steps.

I have often thought that, had she told me then, and taken me to her heart—her strong, brave, noble heart—I could have derived courage from it, and could have borne the dreadful truth I was forced to know afterwards. But the strong are so impatient with us! They leave us too soon—their own strength revolts at our weakness; so we are often left, broken in this weakness, for want of a little patience and sympathy.

Harry came in, a short time after Ellen had left me. "What has she been saying?" he cried, passionately. His eyes were wild and bloodshot; his beautiful black hair flung all in disorder about his face.

"Dear Harry, she has said nothing about you," I answered, trembling. "She only asked what was your profession, and how much we had a year. That was all."

"Why did she ask this? What business was it of hers?" cried Harry, fiercely. "Tell me;" and he shook me roughly; "what did you answer her, little fool?"

"Oh, nothing;" and I began to cry: it was because he frightened me. "I said, what is true, that I knew nothing of your affairs, as indeed what concern is it of mine? I could say nothing more, Harry."

"Better that than too much," he muttered; and then he flung me harshly back on the sofa, saying, "Tears and folly and weakness! The same round—always the same! Why did I marry a mere pretty doll—a plaything—no wife!"

And then he seemed to think he had said too much: for he came to me and kissed me, and said that he loved me. But, for the first time in our married life his kisses did not soothe me, nor did I believe his assurances.

All that night I heard Ellen walk steadily and unresting through her room. She never slackened her pace, she never stopped, she never hurried; but, the same slow measured tread went on; the firm foot, yet light, falling as if to music, her very step the same mixture of manliness and womanhood as her character. After this burst of passion Harry's tender-

ness, to me became unbounded; as if he wished to make up to me for some wrong. I need not say how soon I forgave him, nor how much I loved him again. All my love came back in one full boundless tide; and the current of my being set towards him again as before. If he had asked me for my life then, as his mere fancy, to destroy, I would have given it him. I would have lain down and died, if he had wished to see the flowers grow over my grave.

My husband and Ellen grew more estranged as his affection seemed to return to me. His manner to her was defying; hers to him contemptuous. I heard her call him villain once, in the garden below the windows; at which he laughed—his wicked laugh, and said "tell her, and see if she will believe you!"

I was sitting in the window, working. It was a cold damp day in the late autumn, when those chill fogs of November are just beginning; those fogs with the frost in them, that steal into one's very heart. It was a day when a visible blight is in the air, when death is abroad everywhere, and suffering and crime. I was alone in the drawing-room. Ellen was upstairs, and my husband, as I believed, in the City. But I have remembered since, that I heard the hall-door softly opened, and a footstep steal quietly by the drawing room up the stairs. The evening was just beginning to close in—dull, gray, and ghostlike; the dying daylight melting into the long shadows that stalked like wandering ghosts about the fresh-made grave of nature. I sat working still, at some of those small garments about which I dreamed such fond dreams, and wove such large hopes of happiness; and as I sat, while the evening fell heavy about me, a mysterious shadow of evil passed over me, a dread presentiment, a consciousness of ill, that made me tremble, as if in ague—angry at myself though for my folly. But, it was reality. It was no hysterical sinking of the spirits that I felt; no mere nervousness or cowardice; it was something I had never known before; a knowledge, a presence, a power, a warning word, a spirit's cry, that had swept by me as the fearful evil marched on to its conclusion.

I heard a faint scream up stairs. It was so faint I could scarcely distinguish it from a sudden rush of wind through an opening door, or the chirp of a mouse behind the wainscot. Presently, I heard the same sound again; and then a dull muffled noise overhead, as of some one walking heavily, or dragging a heavy weight across the floor. I sat petrified by fear. A nameless agony was upon me that deprived me of all power of action. I thought of Harry and I thought of Ellen, in an inextricable cypher of misery and agony; but I could not have defined a line in my own mind; I could not have explained what it was I feared. I only knew that it was sorrow that was to

come, and sin. I listened, but all was still again; once only, I thought I heard a low moan, and once a muttering voice—which I know now to have been my husband's, speaking passionately to himself.

And then his voice swept stormfully through the house, crying wildly, "Mary, Mary! Quick here! Your sister! Ellen!"

I ran up-stairs. It seems to me now, that I almost flew. I found Ellen lying on the floor of her own room, just inside the door; her feet towards the door of my husband's study, which was immediately opposite her room. She was fainting; at least I thought so then. We raised her up between us; my husband trembling more than I; and I unfastened her gown, and threw water on her face, and pushed back her hair; but she did not revive. I told Harry to go for a doctor.

A horrid thought was stealing over me; but he lingered, as I fancied, unaccountably and cruelly, though I twice asked him to go. Then, I thought that perhaps he was too much overcome; so I went to him, and kissed him, and said, "She will soon be better, Harry," cheerfully, to cheer him. But I felt in my heart that she was no more.

At last, after many urgent entreaties, and after the servants had come up, clustering in a frightened way round the bed—but he sent them away again immediately—he put on his hat, and went out, soon returning with a strange man; not our own doctor. This man was rude and coarse, and ordered me aside, as I stood bathing my sister's face, and pulled her arm and hand roughly, to see how dead they felt, and stooped down close to her lips—I thought he touched them even—all in a violent and insolent way, that shocked me and bewildered me. My husband stood in the shadow, ghastly pale, but not interfering.

It was too true, what the strange man had said so coarsely. She was dead. Yes; the creature that an hour ago had been so full of life, so beautiful, so resolute, and young, was now a stiffening corpse, inanimate and dead, without life and without hope. Oh! that word had set my brain on fire! Dead! here, in my house, under my roof—dead so mysteriously, so strangely—why? How? It was a fearful dream, it was no truth that lay there. I was in a nightmare; I was not sane; and thinking how ghastly it all was, I fainted softly on the bed, no one knowing, till some time after, that I had fallen, and was not praying. When I recovered I was in my own room, alone. Crawling feebly to my sister's door, I found that she had been washed and dressed, and was now laid out on her bed. It struck me that all had been done in strange haste; Harry telling me the servants had done it while I fainted. I knew afterwards that he had told them it was I, and that I would have no help. The mystery of it all was soon to be unravelled.

One thing I was decided on—to watch by my sister this night. It was in vain that my husband oppressed me; in vain that he coaxed me by his caresses, or tried to terrify me with angry threats. Something of my sister's nature seemed to have passed into me; and unless he had positively prevented me by force, no other means would have had any effect. He gave way to me at last—angrily—and the night came on and found me sitting by the bedside watching my dear sister.

How beautiful she looked! Her face, still with the gentle mark of sorrow on it that it had in life, looked so grand! She was so great, so pure; she was like a goddess sleeping; she was not like a mere woman of this earth. She did not seem to be dead; there was life about her yet, for there was still the look of power and of human sympathy that she used to have when alive. The soul was there still, and love, and knowledge.

By degrees a strange feeling of her living presence in the room came over me. Alone in the still midnight, with no sound, no person near me, it seemed as if I had leisure and power to pass into the world beyond the grave. I felt my sister near me; I felt the passing of her life about me, as when one sleeps, but still is conscious that another life is weaving in with ours. It seemed as if her breath fell warm on my face; as if her shadowy arms held me in their clasp; as if her eyes were looking through the darkness at me; as if I held her hands in mine, and her long hair floated round my forehead. And then, to shake off these fancies, and convince myself that she was really dead, I looked again and again at her lying there: a marble corpse, ice-cold with the lips set and rigid, and the death band beneath her chin. There she was, stiff in her white shroud, the snowy linen pressing so lightly on her; no life within, no warmth about her, and all my fancies were vain dreams. Then I buried my face in my hands, and wept as if my heart was breaking. And when I turned away my eyes from her, the presence came around me again. So long as I watched her, it was not there; I saw the corpse only; but when I shut this out from me, then it seemed as if a barrier had been removed, and that my sister floated near me again.

I had been praying, sitting thus in these alternate feelings of her spiritual presence and her bodily death, when, raising my head and looking towards the farther corner of the room, I saw, standing at some little distance, my sister Ellen. I saw her distinctly, as distinctly as you may see that red fire blaze. Sadly and lovingly her dark eyes looked at me, sadly her gentle lips smiled, and by look and gesture too she showed me that she wished to speak to me. Strange, I was not frightened. It was so natural to see her there, that for the moment I forgot that she was dead.

"Ellen!" I said, "what is it?"

The figure smiled. It came nearer. Oh! do not say it was fancy! I saw it advance; it came glidingly; I remembered afterwards that it did not walk—but it came forward—to the light, and stood not ten paces from me. It looked at me still, in the same sad gentle way, and somehow—I do not know whether with the hand or by the turning of the head—it showed me the throat, where were the distinct marks of two powerful hands. And then it pointed to its heart; and looking, I saw the broad stain of blood above it. And then I heard her voice—I swear I was not mad—I heard it, I say to you distinctly—whisper softly, "Mary!" and then it said, still more audibly, "Murdered!"

And then the figure vanished, and suddenly the whole room was vacant. That one dread word had sounded as if forced out by the pressure of some strong agony,—like a man revealing his life's secret when dying. And when it had been spoken, or rather wailed forth, there was a sudden sweep and chilly rush through the air; and the life, the soul, the presence, fled. I was alone again with Death. The mission had been fulfilled; the warning had been given; and then my sister passed away,—for her work with earth was done.

Brave and calm as the strongest man that ever fought on a battle-field, I stood up beside my sister's body. I unfastened her last dress, and threw it back from her chest and shoulders; I raised her head and took off the bandage from round her face; and then I saw deep black bruises on her throat, the marks of hands that had grappled her from behind, and that had strangled her. And then I looked further, and I saw a small wound below the left breast, about which hung two or three clots of blood, that had oozed up, despite all care and knowledge in her manner of murder. I knew then she had first been suffocated, to prevent her screams, and then stabbed where the wound would bleed inwardly, and show no sign to the mere bystander.

I covered her up carefully again. I laid the pillow smooth and straight, and laid the heavy head gently down. I drew the shroud close above the dreadful mark of murder. And then—still as calm and resolute as I had been ever since the revelation had come to me—I left the room, and passed into my husband's study. It was on me to discover all the truth.

His writing-table was locked. Where my strength came from, I know not; but, with a chisel that was lying on the table, I prized the drawer and broke the lock. I opened it. There was a long and slender dagger lying there, red with blood; a handful of woman's hair rudely severed from the head, lay near it. It was my sister's hair!—that wavy silken auncled auburn hair that I had always loved and admired so much! And near to these again, were stamps, and dies, and moulds, and plates, and handwritings.

with facsimiles beneath, and bankers' cheques, and a heap of leaden coin, and piles of incomplete bank-notes; and all the evidences of a counter's and a forger's trade,—the suspicion of which had caused those bitter quarrellings between poor Ellen and my husband—the knowledge of which had caused her death.

With these things I saw also a letter addressed to Ellen in my husband's handwriting. It was an unfinished letter, as if it had displeased him, and he had made another copy. It began with these words—no fear that I should forget them; they are burnt into my brain—"I never really loved her, Ellen; she pleased me, only as a doll would please a child; and I married her from pity, not from love. You, Ellen, you alone could fill my heart; you alone are my fit helpmate. Fly with me Ellen——." Here, the letter was left unfinished; but it gave me enough to explain all the meaning of the first weeks of my sister's stay here, and why she had called him villain, and why he had told her that she might tell me, and that I would not believe.

I saw it all now. I turned my head, to see my husband standing a few paces behind me. Good Heaven! I have often thought, was that man the same man I had loved so long and fondly?

The strength of horror, not of courage, upheld me. I knew he meant to kill me, but that did not alarm me; I only dreaded lest his hand should touch me. It was not death, it was he I shrank from. I believe if he had touched me then, I should have fallen dead at his feet. I stretched out my arms in horror, thrust him back, uttering a piercing shriek; and while he made an effort to seize me, overreaching himself in the madness of his fury, I rushed by him, shrieking still, and so fled away into the darkness, where I lived, oh! for many many months!

When I woke again, I found that my poor baby had died, and that my husband had gone none knew where. But the fear of his return haunted me. I could get no rest day or night for dread of him; and I felt going mad with the one hard thought for ever pitilessly pursuing me—that I should fall again into his hands. I put on widow's weeds—for indeed am I too truly widowed!—and then I began wandering about; wandering in poverty and privation, expecting every moment to meet him face to face; wandering about, so that I may escape the more easily when the moment does come.

THE SEVENTH POOR TRAVELLER.

We were all yet looking at the Widow, after her frightened voice had died away, when the Book-Pedlar, apparently afraid of being forgotten, asked what did we think of his giving us a Legend to wind-up with? We all said (except the Lawyer, who wanted a description of the murderer to send to the

Police Hue and Cry, and who was with great difficulty nudged to silence by the united efforts of the company) that we thought we should like it. So, the Book-Pedlar started off at once, thus:

GIRT round with rugged mountains
The fair Lake Constance lies:
In her blue heart reflected,
Shine back the starry skies;
And watching each white cloudlet
Float silently and slow,
You think a piece of Heaven
Lies on our earth below!

Midnight is there: and silence
Enthroned in Heaven, looks down
Upon her own calm mirror,
Upon a sleeping town:
For Bregenz, that quaint city
Upon the Tyrol shore,
Has stood above Lake Constance,
A thousand years and more.

Her battlements and towers,
Upon their rocky steep,
Have cast their trembling shadow
For ages on the deep:
Mountain, and lake, and valley,
A sacred legend know,
Of how the town was saved, one night,
Three hundred years ago.

Far from her home and kindred,
A Tyrol maid had fled,
To serve in the Swiss valleys,
And toil for daily bread;
And every year that fled
So silently and fast,
Seemed to bear farther from her
The memory of the Past.

She served kind, gentle masters,
Nor asked for rest or change;
Her friends seemed no more new ones,
Their speech seemed no more strange;
And when she led her cattle
To pasture every day,
She ceased to look and wonder
On which side Bregenz lay.

She spoke no more of Bregenz,
With longing and with tears;
Her Tyrol home seemed faded
In a deep mist of years,
She heeded not the rumours
Of Austrian war and strife;
Each day she rose contented,
To the calm toils of life.

Yet, when her master's children
Would clustering round her stand,
She sang them the old ballads
Of her own native land;
And when at morn and evening
She knelt before God's throne,
The accents of her childhood
Rose to her lips alone.

And so she dwelt: the valley
More peaceful year by year;
Yet suddenly strange portents,
Of some great deed seemed near.

The golden corn was bending
Upon its fragile stalk,
While farmers, heedless of their fields,
Paced up and down in talk.

The men seemed stern and altered,
With looks cast on the ground;
With anxious faces, one by one,
The women gathered round;
All talk of flax, or spinning,
Or work, was put away;
The very children seemed afraid
To go alone to play.

One day, out in the meadow
With strangers from the town,
Some secret plan discussing,
The men walked up and down.
Yet, now and then seemed watching,
A strange uncertain gleam,
That looked like lances 'mid the trees,
That stood below the stream.

At eve they all assembled,
All care and doubt were fled;
With jovial laugh they feasted,
The board was nobly spread.
The elder of the village
Rose up, his glass in hand,
And cried, "We drink the downfall
"Of an accursed land!"

"The night is growing darker,
"Ere one more day is flown,
"Bregenz, our foemen's stronghold,
"Bregenz shall be our own!"
The women shrank in terror
(Yet Pride, too, had her part),
But one poor Tyrol maiden
Felt death within her heart.

Before her, stood fair Bregenz;
Once more her towers arose;
What were the friends beside her?
Only her country's foes!
The faces of her kinsfolk,
The days of childhood flown,
The echoes of her mountains,
Reclaimed her as their own!

Nothing she heard around her,
(Though shouts rang forth again,)
Gone were the green Swiss valleys,
The pasture, and the plain;
Before her eyes one vision,
And in her heart one cry,
That said, "Go forth, save Bregenz,
• And then, if need be, die!"

With trembling haste and breathless,
With noiseless step, she sped;
Horses and weary cattle
Were standing in the shed,
She loosed the strong white charger,
That fed from out her hand;
She mounted, and she turned his head
Towards her native land.

Out—out into the darkness—
Faster, and still more fast;
The smooth grass flies behind her,
The chestnut wood is past;
She looks up; clouds are heavy:
Why is her steed so slow?
Scarcely the wind beside them,
Can pass them as they go.

"Faster!" she cries, "O faster!"
Eleven the church-bells chime;
"O God," she cries, "help Bregenz,
And bring me there in time!"
But louder than bells' ringing,
Or lowing of the kine,
Grows nearer in the midnight
The rushing of the Rhine.

She strives to pierce the blackness,
And looser throws the rein;
Her steed must breast the waters
That dash above his mane.
How gallantly, how nobly,
He struggles through the foam,
And see—in the far distance,
Shine out the lights of home!

Shall not the roaring waters
Their headlong gallop check?
The steed draws back in terror,
She leans above his neck.
To watch the flowing darkness,
The bank is high and steep,
One pause—he staggers forward,
And plunges in the deep.

Up the steep bank he bears her,
And now, they rush again
Towards the heights of Bregenz,
That Tower above the plain.
They reach the gate of Bregenz,
Just as the midnight rings,
And out come serf and soldier
To meet the news she brings.

Bregenz is saved! Ere daylight
Her battlements are manned,
Defiance greets the army
That marches on the land.
And if to deeds heroic
Should endless fame be paid,
Bregenz does well to honour
The noble Tyrol maid.

Three hundred years are vanished,
And yet upon the hill
An old stone gateway rises,
To do her honour still.
And there, when Bregenz women
Sit spinning in the shade,
They see in quaint old carving
The Charger and the Maid.

And when, to guard old Bregenz,
By gateway, street, and tower,
The warder paces all night long,
And calls each passing hour;
"Nine," "ten," "eleven," he cries aloud,
And then (O crown of Fame!)
When midnight pauses in the skies,
He calls the maiden's name!

THE ROAD.

• The stories being all finished, and the Was-sail too, we broke up as the Cathedral-bell struck Twelve. I did not take leave of my Travellers that night; for, it had come into my head to reappear in conjunction with some hot coffee, at seven in the morning.
As I passed along the High Street, I heard the Waits at a distance, and struck off to find them. They were playing near one of the old

rates of the City, at the corner of a wonderfully quaint row of red-brick tenements, which the clarionet obligingly informed me were inhabited by the Minor-Canons. They had odd little porches over the doors, like sounding-boards over old pulpits; and I thought I should like to see one of the Minor-Canons come out upon his top step, and favour us with a little Christmas discourse about the poor scholars of Rochester: taking for his text the words of his Master, relative to the devouring of Widows' houses.

The clarionet was so communicative, and my inclinations were (as they generally are), of so vagabond a tendency, that I accompanied the Waits across an open green called the Vines, and assisted—in the French sense—at the performance of two waltzes, two polkas, and three Irish melodies, before I thought of my inn any more. However, I returned to it then, and found a fiddle in the kitchen, and Ben, the wall-eyed young man, and two chambermaids, circling round the great deal table with the utmost animation.

I had a very bad night. I cannot have been owing to the turkey, or the beef—and the Wassail is out of the question—but, in every endeavour that I made to get to sleep, I failed most dismally. Now, I was at Badajos with a fiddle; now, haunted by the widow's murdered sister. Now, I was riding on a little blind girl, to save my native town from sack and ruin. Now, I was expostulating with the dead mother of the unconscious little sailor-boy; now, dealing in diamonds in Sky Fair; now, for life or death, hiding mince-pies under bed-room carpets. For all this, I was never asleep; and, in whatsoever unreasonable direction my mind rambled, the effigy of Master Richard Watts perpetually embarrassed it.

In a word, I only got out of the worshipful Master Richard Watts's way, by getting out of bed in the dark at six o'clock, and tumbling, as my custom is, into all the cold water that could be accumulated for the purpose. The outer air was dull and cold enough in the street, when I came down there; and the one candle in our supper-room at Watts's Charity looked as pale in the burning, as if it had had a bad night too. But, my Travellers had all slept soundly, and they took to the hot coffee, and the piles of bread and butter which Ben had arranged like deals in a timber-yard, as kindly as I could desire.

While it was yet scarcely daylight, we all came out into the street together, and there shook hands. The widow took the little sailor towards Chatham, where he was to find a steamboat for Sheerness; the lawyer, with an extremely knowing look, went his own way, without committing himself by

announcing his intentions; two more struck off by the cathedral and old castle for Maidstone; and the book-pedlar accompanied me over the bridge. As for me, I was going to walk, by Cobham Woods, as far upon my way to London as I fancied.

When I came to the stile and footpath by which I was to diverge from the main-road, I bade farewell to my last remaining Poor Traveller, and pursued my way alone. And now, the mists began to rise in the most beautiful manner, and the sun to shine; and as I went on through the bracing air, seeing the hoar-frost sparkle everywhere, I felt as if all Nature shared in the joy of the great Birthday.

Going through the woods, the softness of my tread upon the mossy ground and among the brown leaves, enhanced the Christmas sacredness by which I felt surrounded. As the wetted stems environed me, I thought how the Founder of the time had never raised his benignant hand, save to bless and heal, except in the case of one unconscious tree. By Cobham Hall, I came to the village, and the churchyard where the dead had been quietly buried, "in the sure and certain hope" which Christmas time inspired. What children could I see at play, and not be loving of, recalling who had loved them! No garden that I passed, was out of unison with the day, for I remembered that the tomb was in a garden, and that "she, supposing him to be the gardener," had said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." In time, the distant river with the ships, came full in, and with it pictures of the poor fish-mending their nets, who arose and followed him—of the teaching of the people from a ship pushed off a little way from shore, for reason of the multitude—of a majestic figure walking on the water, in the loneliness of night. My very shadow on the ground was eloquent of Christmas; for, did not the people lay their sick where the mere shadow of the men who had heard and seen him might fall as they passed along?

Thus, Christmas begirt me, far and near until I had come to Blackheath, and had walked down the long vista of gnarled old trees in Greenwich Park, and was being steam-rattled, through the mists now closing in once more, towards the lights of London. Brightly they shone, but not so brightly as my own fire and the brighter faces around it when we came together to celebrate the day. And there I told of worthy Master Richard Watts, and of my supper with the Seven Poor Travellers who were neither Rogues nor Proctors, and from that hour to this, have never seen one of them again.

THE HOLLY-TREE INN.

BEING THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF ONE NUMBER AND A HALF.

CHRISTMAS, 1855.

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THE GUEST.

I HAVE kept one secret in the course of my life. I am a bashful man. Nobody would suppose it, nobody ever does suppose it, nobody ever did suppose it. But, I am naturally a bashful man. This is the secret which I have never breathed until now.

I might greatly move the reader, by some account of the innumerable places I have not been to, the innumerable people I have not called upon or received, the innumerable social evasions I have been guilty of, solely because I am by original constitution and character, a bashful man. But, I will leave the reader moved, and proceed with the object before me.

That object is, to give a plain account of my travels and discoveries in the Holly-Tree Inn; in which place of good entertainment for man and beast, I was once snowed up.

It happened in the memorable year when I parted for ever from Angela Leath whom I was shortly to have married, on making the discovery that she preferred my bosom friend. From our school days I had freely admitted Edwin, in my own mind, to be far superior to myself, and, though I was grievously wounded at heart, I felt the preference to be natural, and tried to forgive them both. It was under these circumstances that I resolved to go to America—on my way to the Devil.

Communicating my discovery neither to Angela nor to Edwin, but resolving to write each of them an affecting letter conveying my blessing and forgiveness, which the steam-tender for shore should carry to the post when I myself should be bound for the New World, far beyond recall;—I say, locking up my grief in my own breast, and consoling myself as I could, with the prospect of being generous, I quietly left all I held dear, and started on the desolate journey I have mentioned.

The dead winter-time was in full dreari-

ness when I left my chambers for ever, at five o'clock in the morning. I had shaved by candle-light, of course, and was miserably cold, and experienced that general all-pervading sensation of getting up to be hanged, which I have usually found inseparable from untimely rising under such circumstances.

How well I remember the forlorn aspect of Fleet Street when I came out of the Temple! The street-lamps flickering in the gusty north-east wind, as if the very gas were contorted with cold; the white-topped houses; the bleak, star-lighted sky; the market people and other early stragglers, trotting, to circulate their almost frozen blood; the hospitable light and warmth of the few coffee-shops and public-houses that were open for such customers; the hard, dry, frosty rime with which the air was charged (the wind had already beaten it into every crevice), and which lashed my face like a steel whip.

It wanted nine days to the end of the month, and end of the year. The Post-office packet for the United States was to depart from Liverpool, weather permitting, on the first of the ensuing month, and I had the intervening time on my hands. I had taken this into consideration, and had resolved to make a visit to a certain spot (which I need not name), on the further borders of Yorkshire. It was endeared to me by my having first seen Angela at a farmhouse in that place, and my melancholy was gratified by the idea of taking a wintry leave of it before my expatriation. I ought to explain, that to avoid being sought out before my resolution should have been rendered irrevocable by being carried into full effect, I had written to Angela overnight, in my usual manner, lamenting that urgent business—of which she should know all particulars by-and-by—took me unexpectedly away from her for a week or ten days.

There was no Northern Railway at that time, and in its place there were stage-coaches: which I occasionally find myself, in

common with some other people, affecting to lament now, but which everybody dreaded as a very serious penance then. I had secured the box-seat on the fastest of these, and my business in Fleet Street was, to get into a cab with my portmanteau, so to make the best of my way to the Peacock at Islington, where I was to join this coach. But, when one of our Temple watchmen who carried my portmanteau into Fleet Street for me, told me about the huge blocks of ice that had for some days just been floating in the river, having closed up in the night and made a walk from the Temple Gardens over to the Surrey shore, I began to ask myself the question, Whether the box-seat would not be likely to put a sudden and a frosty end to my unhappiness? I was heart-broken, it is true, and yet I was not quite so far gone as to wish to be frozen to death.

When I got up to the Peacock—where I found everybody drinking hot purl in self-preservation—I asked, if there were an inside seat to spare? I then discovered that, inside or out, I was the only passenger. This gave me a still livelier idea of the great inclemency of the weather, since that coach always loaded particularly well. However, I took a little purl (which I found uncommonly good), and got into the coach. When I was seated, they built me up with straw to the waist, and, conscious of making a rather ridiculous appearance, I began my journey.

It was still dark when we left the Peacock. For a little while, pale uncertain ghosts of houses and trees appeared and vanished, and then it was hard, black, frozen day. People were lighting their fires; smoke was mounting straight up, high into the rarefied air; and we were rattling for Highgate Archway over the hardest ground I have ever heard the ring of iron shoes on. As we got into the country, everything seemed to have grown old and grey. The roads, the trees, thatched roofs of cottages and homesteads, the ricks in farmers' yards. Out-door work was abandoned, horse-troughs at roadside inns were frozen hard, no stragglers lounged about, doors were close shut, little turnpike-houses had blazing fires inside, and children (even turnpike-people have children, and seem to like them), rubbed the frost from the little panes of glass with their clubby arms, that their bright eyes might catch a glimpse of the solitary coach going by. I don't know when the snow began to set in; but, I know that we were changing horses somewhere when I heard the guard remark, "That the old lady up in the sky was picking her geese pretty hard to-day." Then, indeed, I found the white down falling fast and thick.

The lonely day wore on, and I dozed it out as a lonely traveller does. I was warm and valiant after eating and drinking—particularly after dinner; cold and depressed at all other times. I was always bewildered as to time and place, and always more or less out of my

senses. The coach and horses seemed to execute in chorus, Auld Lang Syne, without a moment's intermission. They kept the time and tune with the greatest regularity, and rose into the swell at the beginning of the Refrain, with a precision that worried me to death. While we changed horses, the guard and coachman went stumping up and down the road, printing off their shoes in the snow, and poured so much liquid consolation into themselves without being any the worse for it, that I began to confound them, as it darkened again, with two great white casks standing on end. Our horses tumbled down in solitary places, and we got them up—which was the pleasantest variety I had, for it warmed me. And it snowed and snowed, and still it snowed, and never left off snowing. All night long, we went on in this manner. Thus, we came round the clock, upon the Great North Road, to the performance of Auld Lang Syne by day again. And it snowed and snowed, and still it snowed, and never left off snowing.

I forget now, where we were at noon on the second day, and where we ought to have been; but, I know that we were scores of miles behindhand, and that our case was growing worse every hour. The drift was becoming prodigiously deep; landmarks were getting snowed out; the road and the fields were all one; instead of having fences and hedgerows to guide us, we went crunching on, over an unbroken surface of ghastly white that might sink beneath us at any moment and drop us down a whole hill-side. Still, the coachman and guard—who kept together on the box, always in council, and looking well about them—made out the track with astonishing sagacity.

When we came in sight of a town, it looked, to my fancy, like a large drawing on a slate, with abundance of slate-pencil expended on the churches and houses where the snow lay thickest. When we came within a town, and found the church clocks all stopped, the dial-faces choked with snow, and the Inn-signs blotted out, it seemed as if the whole place were overgrown with white moss. As to the coach, it was a mere snowball; similarly, the men and boys who ran along beside us to the town's end, turning our clogged wheels and encouraging our horses, were men and boys of snow; and the bleak wild solitude to which they at last dismissed us, was a snowy Sahara. One would have thought this enough: notwithstanding which, I pledge my word that it snowed and snowed, and still it snowed, and never left off snowing.

We performed Auld Lang Syne the whole day; seeing nothing, out of towns and villages, but the track of stags, hares, and foxes, and sometimes of birds. At nine o'clock at night, on a Yorkshire moor, a cheerful burst from our horn, and a welcome sound of talking, with a glimmering and moving about of lanterns, roused me from my

drawy stable. I found that we were going to change.

They helped me out, and I said to a waiter, whose bare head became as white as King Lear's in a single minute: "What inn is this?"

"The Holly-Tree, sir," said he.

"Upon my word, I believe," said I, apologetically to the guard and coachman, "that I must stop here."

Now, the landlord, and the landlady, and the ostler, and the postboy, and all the stable authorities, had already asked the coachman, to the wide-eyed interest of all the rest of the establishment, if he meant to go on? The coachman had already replied, "Yes, he'd take her through it"—meaning by *Her*, the coach—"if so be as George would stand by him." George was the guard, and he had already sworn that he *would* stand by him. So, the helpers were already getting the horses out.

My declaring myself beaten, after this parley, was not an announcement without preparation. Indeed, but for the way to the announcement being smoothed by the parley, I more than doubt whether, as an innately bashful man, I should have had the confidence to make it. As it was, it received the approval, even of the guard and coachman. Therefore, with many confirmations of my inclining, and many remarks from one bystander to another, that the gentleman could go far and by the mail to-morrow, whereas to-night he would only be froze, and where was the good of a gentleman being froze—ah, let alone buried alive (which latter clause was added by a humorous helper as a joke at my expense, and was extremely well received), I saw my portmanteau got out stiff, like a frozen body; did the handsome thing by the guard and coachman; wished them good night and a prosperous journey; and, a little ashamed of myself after all, for leaving them to fight it out alone, followed the landlord, landlady, and waiter of the Holly-Tree, up-stairs.

I thought I had never seen such a large room as that into which they showed me. It had five windows, with dark red curtains that would have absorbed the light of a general illumination; and there were complications of drapery at the top of the curtains, that went wandering about the wall in a most extraordinary manner. I asked for a smaller room, and they told me there was no smaller room. They could screen me in, however, the landlord said. They brought a great old japanised screen, with natives (Japanese, I suppose), engaged in a variety of idiotic pursuits all over it; and left me, roasting whole before an immense fire

My bedroom was some quarter of a mile off, up a great staircase, at the end of a long gallery; and nobody knows what a misery this is to a bashful man who would rather not meet people on the stairs. It was the

grimiest room I have ever had the night-mare in; and all the furniture, from the two posts of the bed to the two old silver candlesticks, was tall, high-shouldered, and awkwardly waisted. Below, in my sitting-room, if I looked round my screen, the wind rushed at me like a mad bull; if I stuck to my arm-chair, the fire scorched me to the colour of a new brick. The chimney-piece was very high, and there was a bad glass—what I may call a waxy glass—above it, which, when I stood up, just showed me my anterior phrenological developments—and these never look well, in any subject, cut short off at the eyebrow. If I stood with my back to the fire, a gloomy vault of darkness above and beyond the screen insisted on being looked at; and, in its dim remoteness, the drapery of the ten curtains of the five windows went twisting and creeping about, like a nest of gigantic worms.

I suppose that what I observe in myself must be observed by some other men of similar character in *themselves*; therefore I am emboldened to mention, that when I travel, I never arrive at a place but I immediately want to go away from it. Before I had finished my supper of broiled fowl and mulled port, I had impressed upon the waiter in detail, my arrangements for departure in the morning. Breakfast and bill at eight. Fly at nine. Two horses, or, if needful, even four.

Tired though I was, the night appeared about a week long. In cases of nightmare, I thought of Angela, and felt more depressed than ever by the reflection that I was on the shortest road to Gretna Green. What had I to do with Gretna Green? I was not going *that* way to the Devil, but by the American route, I remarked, in my bitterness.

In the morning I found that it was snowing still, that it had snowed all night, and that I was snowed up. Nothing could get out of that spot on the moor, or could come at it, until the road had been cut out by laborers from the market-town. When they might cut their way to the Holly-Tree, nobody could tell me.

It was now Christmas Eve. I should have had a dismal Christmas-time of it anywhere, and, consequently, that did not so much matter; still, being snowed up, was, like dying of frost, a thing I had not bargained for. I felt very lonely. Yet I could no more have proposed to the landlord and landlady to admit me to their society (though I should have liked it very much), than I could have asked them to present me with a piece of plate. Here my great secret, the real bashfulness of my character, is to be observed. Like most bashful men, I judge of other people as if they were bashful too. Besides being far too shame-faced to make the proposal myself, I really had a delicate misgiving that it would be in the last degree disconcerting to them.

Trying to settle down, therefore, in my solitude, I first of all asked what books there were in the house? The waiter brought me a Book of Hours, two or three old Newspapers, a little Song-book terminating in a collection of Toasts and Sentiments, a little Jest-book, an odd volume of Peregrine Pickle, and the Sentimental Journey. I knew every word of the two last already, but I read them through again; then tried to hum all the songs (Auld Lang Syne was among them); went entirely through the jokes—in which I found a fund of melancholy adapted to my state of mind; proposed all the toasts, enunciated all the sentiments, and mastered the papers. The latter had nothing in them but Stock advertisements, a meeting about a county rate, and a highway robbery. As I am a greedy reader, I could not make this supply hold out until night; it was exhausted by tea-time. Being then entirely cast upon my own resources, I got through an hour in considering what to do next. Ultimately, it came into my head (from which I was anxious by any means to exclude Angela and Edwin), that I would endeavour to recall my experience of Inns, and would try how long it lasted me. I stirred the fire, moved my chair a little to one side of the screen—not daring to go far, for I knew the wind was waiting to make a rush at me—I could hear it growling—and began.

My first impressions of an Inn, dated from the Nursery; consequently, I went back to the Nursery for a starting-point, and found myself at the knee of a sallow woman with a fishy eye, an aquiline nose, and a green gown, whose speciality was a dismal narrative of a landlord by the roadside, whose visitors unaccountably disappeared for many years, until it was discovered that the pursuit of his life had been to convert them into pies. For the better devotion of himself to this branch of industry, he had constructed a secret door behind the head of the bed; and when the visitor (oppressed with pie), had fallen asleep, this wicked landlord would look softly in with a lamp in one hand and a knife in the other, would cut his throat, and would make him into pies; for which purpose he had coppers underneath a trap-door, always boiling; and rolled out his pastry in the dead of the night. Yet even he was not insensible to the stings of conscience, for he never went to sleep without being heard to mutter, "Too much pepper!"—which was eventually the cause of his being brought to justice. I had no sooner disposed of this criminal than there started up another, of the same period, whose profession was, originally, housebreaking; in the pursuit of which art he had had his right ear chopped off one night as he was burglariously getting in at a window, by a brave and lovely servant-maid (whom the aquiline-nosed woman, though not at all answering the description, always mysteriously implied to be herself). After several years this brave and lovely servant-maid was married to the land-

lord of a country Inn: which landlord had this remarkable characteristic, that he always wore a silk nightcap, and never would, on any consideration, take it off. At last, one night, when he was fast asleep, the brave and lovely woman lifted up his silk nightcap on the right side, and found that he had no ear there; upon which, she sagaciously perceived that he was the clipped housebreaker, who had married her with the intention of putting her to death. She immediately heated the poker and terminated his career, for which she was taken to King George upon his throne, and received the compliments of royalty on her great discretion and valour. This same narrator, who had a Ghoulish pleasure, I have long been persuaded, in terrifying me to the utmost confines of my reason, had another authentic anecdote within her own experience, founded, I now believe, upon Raymond and Agnes or the Bleeding Nun. She said it happened to her brother-in-law, who was immensely rich—which my father was not; and immensely tall—which my father was not. It was always a point with this Ghoule to present my dearest relations and friends to my youthful mind, under circumstances of disparaging contrast. The brother-in-law was riding once, through a forest, on a magnificent horse (we had no magnificent horse at our house), attended by a favourite and valuable Newfoundland dog (we had no dog), when he found himself benighted, and came to an Inn. A dark woman opened the door, and he asked her if he could have a bed there? She answered yes, and put his horse in the stable, and took him into a room where there were two dark men. While he was at supper, a parrot in the room began to talk, saying, "Blood, blood! Wipe up the blood!" Upon which, one of the dark men wrung the parrot's neck, and said he was fond of roasted parrots, and he meant to have this one for breakfast in the morning. After eating and drinking heartily, the immensely rich tall brother-in-law went up to bed; but, he was rather vexed, because they had shut his dog in the stable, saying that they never allowed dogs in the house. He sat very quiet for more than an hour, thinking and thinking, when, just as his candle was burning out, he heard a scratch at the door. He opened the door, and there was the Newfoundland dog! The dog came softly in, smelt about him, went straight to some straw in a corner which the dark men had said covered apples, tore the straw away, and disclosed two sheets steeped in blood. Just at that moment the candle went out, and the brother-in-law, looking through a chink in the door, saw the two dark men stealing up-stairs; one armed with a dagger, that long (about five feet); the other carrying a chopper, a sack, and a spade. Having no remembrance of the close of this adventure, I suppose my faculties to have been always so frozen with terror at this stage of it, that the power of listening

stagnated within me for some quarter of an hour.

These barbarous stories carried me, sitting there on the Holly-Tree hearth, to the Road-side Inn, renowned in my time in a sixpenny book with a folding plate, representing in a central compartment of oval form the portrait of Jonathan Bradford, and in four corner compartments four incidents of the tragedy with which the name is associated—coloured with a hand at once so free and economical, that the bloom of Jonathan's complexion passed without any pause into the breeches of the ostler, and, smearing itself off into the next division, became rum in a bottle. Then, I remembered how the landlord was found at the murdered traveller's bedside, with his own knife at his feet, and blood upon his hand; how he was hanged for the murder, notwithstanding his protestation, that he had indeed come there to kill the traveller for his saddle-bags, but had been stricken motionless on finding him already slain; and how the ostler, years afterwards, owned the deed. By this time I had made myself quite uncomfortable. I stirred the fire, and stood with my back to it, as long as I could bear the heat, looking up at the darkness beyond the screen, and at the wormy curtains creeping in and creeping out, like the worms in the ballad of Alonzo the Brave and the fair Imogene.

There was an Inn in the cathedral town where I went to school, which had pleasanter recollections about it than any of these. I took it next. It was the Inn where friends used to put up, and where we used to go to see parents, and to have salmon and fowls, and be tipped. It had an ecclesiastical sign—the Mitre—and a bar that seemed to be the next best thing to a bishopric, it was so snug. I loved the landlord's youngest daughter to distraction—but let that pass. It was in this Inn that I was cried over by my rosy little sister, because I had acquired a black eye in a fight. And though she had been, that Holly-Tree night, for many a long year where all tears are dried, the Mitre softened me yet.

"To be contigued, to-morrow," said I, when I took my candle to go to bed. But, my bed took it upon itself to continue the train of thought that night. It carried me away, like the enchanted carpet, to a distant place (though still in England), and there, alighting from a stage-coach at another Inn in the snow, as I had actually done some years before, I repeated in my sleep, a curious experience I had really had there. More than a year before I made the journey in the course of which I put up at that Inn, I had lost a very near and dear friend by death. Every night since, at home or away from home, I had dreamed of that friend; sometimes, as still living; sometimes, as returning from the world of shadows to comfort me; always, as being beautiful, placid, and happy; never in association with any approach to fear or

distress. It was at a lonely Inn in a wide moorland place, that I halted to pass the night. When I had looked from my bedroom window over the waste of snow on which the moon was shining, I sat down by my fire, to write a letter. I had always, until that hour, kept it within my own breast that I dreamed every night of the dear lost one. But, in the letter that I wrote, I recorded the circumstance, and added that I felt much interested in proving whether the subject of my dream would still be faithful to me, travel-tired, and in that remote place. No. I lost the beloved figure of my vision in parting with the secret. My sleep has never looked upon it since, in sixteen years, but once. I was in Italy, and awoke (or seemed to awake), the well-remembered voice distinctly in my ears, conversing with it. I entreated it, as it rose above my bed and soared up to the vaulted roof of the old room, to answer me a question I had asked, touching the Future Life. My hands were still outstretched towards it as it vanished, when I heard a bell ringing by the garden wall, and a voice, in the deep stillness of the night, calling on all good Christians to pray for the souls of the dead; it being All Souls Eve.

To return to the Holly-Tree. When I awoke next day, it was freezing hard, and the lowering sky threatened more snow. My breakfast cleared away, I drew my chair into its former place, and, with the fire getting so much the better of the landscape that I sat in twilight, resumed my Inn remembrances.

That was a good Inn down in Wiltshire where I put up once, in the days of the hard Wiltshire ale, and before all beer was bitterness. It was on the skirts of Salisbury Plain, and the midnight wind that rattled my lattice window, came moaning at me from Stonehenge. There was a hanger-on at that establishment (a supernaturally-preserved Druid, I believe him to have been, and to be still), with long white hair, and a flinty blue eye always looking afar off: who claimed to have been a shepherd, and who seemed to be ever watching for the re-appearance on the verge of the horizon, of some ghostly flock of sheep that had been mutton for many ages. He was a man with a weird belief in him that no one could count the stones of Stonehenge twice, and make the same number of them; likewise, that any one who counted them three times nine times, and then stood in the centre and said "I dare!" would behold a tremendous apparition, and be stricken dead. He pretended to have seen a bustard (I suspect him to have been familiar with the dodo), in manner following: He was out upon the plain at the close of a late autumn day, when he dimly discerned, going on before him at a curious fitfully bounding pace, what he at first supposed to be a gingham umbrella that had been blown from some conveyance, but what he presently believed to be a lean dwarf man upon a little pony,

Having followed this object for some distance without gaining on it, and having called to it many times without receiving any answer, he pursued it for miles and miles, when, at length coming up with it, he discovered it to be the last bustard in Great Britain, degenerated into a wingless state, and running along the ground. Resolved to capture him or perish in the attempt, he closed with the bustard; but, the bustard, who had formed a counter-resolution that he should do neither, threw him, stunned him, and was last seen making off due west. This weird man at that stage of metempsychosis, may have been a sleep-walker, or an enthusiast, or a robber; but, I awoke one night to find him in the dark at my bedside, repeating the Athanasian Creed in a terrific voice. I paid my bill next day, and retired from the county with all possible precipitation.

That was not a common-place story which worked itself out at a little Inn in Switzerland, while I was staying there. It was a very homely place, in a village of one narrow, zig-zag street among mountains, and you went in at the main door through the cow-house, and among the mules and the dogs and the fowls, before ascending a great bare staircase to the rooms: which were all of unpainted wood, without plastering or papering—like rough packing-cases. Outside, there was nothing but the straggling street, a little toy church with a copper-coloured steeple, a pine forest, a torrent, mist, and mountain-sides. A young man belonging to this Inn, had disappeared eight weeks before (it was winter-time), and was supposed to have had some undiscovered love affair, and to have gone for a soldier. He had got up in the night, and dropped into the village street from the loft in which he slept with another man; and he had done it so quietly, that his companion and fellow-laborer had heard no movement when he was awakened in the morning, and they said "Louis, where is Henri?" They looked for him high and low, in vain, and gave him up. Now, outside this Inn there stood, as there stood outside every dwelling in the village, a stack of firewood; but, the stack belonging to the Inn was higher than any of the rest, because the Inn was the richest house and burnt the most fuel. It began to be noticed, while they were looking high and low, that a Bantam cock, part of the live-stock of the Inn, put himself wonderfully out of his way to get to the top of this wood-stack; and that he would stay there for hours and hours, crowing, until he appeared in danger of splitting himself. Five weeks went on—six weeks—and still this terrible Bantam, neglecting his domestic affairs, was always on the top of the wood-stack, crowing the very eyes out of his head. By this time it was perceived that Louis had become inspired, with a violent animosity towards the terrible Bantam, and one morning he was

at a little window in a gleam of sun, to catch up a rough billet of wood, with a great oath, hurl it at the terrible Bantam crowing on the wood-stack, and bring him down dead. Hereupon, the woman, with a sudden light in her mind, stole round to the back of the wood-stack, and, being a good climber, as all those women are, climbed up, and soon was seen upon the summit, screaming, looking down the hollow within, and crying—"Seize Louis, the murderer! Ring the church bell! Here is the body!" I saw the murderer that day, and I saw him as I sat by my fire at the Holly-Tree Inn, and I see him now, lying shackled with cords on the stable litter, among the mild eyes and the smoking breath of the cows, waiting to be taken away by the police, and stared at by the fearful village. A heavy animal—the dullest animal in the stables—with a stupid head, and a lumpish face devoid of any trace of sensibility, who had been, within the knowledge of the murdered youth, an embezzler of certain small moneys belonging to his master, and who had taken this hopeful mode of putting a possible accuser out of his way. All of which he confessed next day, like a sulky wretch who couldn't be troubled any more, now that they had got hold of him and meant to make an end of him. I saw him once again, on the day of my departure from the Inn. In that Canton the headsman still does his office with a sword; and I came upon this murderer sitting bound to a chair, with his eyes bandaged, on a scaffold in a little market-place. In that instant, a great sword (loaded with quicksilver in the thick part of the blade), swept round him like a gust of wind, or fire, and there was no such creature in the world. My wonder was—not that he was so suddenly dispatched, but that any head was left unraped, within a radius of fifty yards of that tremendous sickle.

That was a good Inn, too, with the kind, cheerful landlady and the honest landlord, where I lived in the shadow of Mont Blanc, and where one of the apartments has a zoological papering on the walls, not so accurately joined but that the elephant occasionally rejoices in a tiger's hind legs and tail; while the lion puts on a trunk and tusks; and the bear, moulting as it were, appears as to portions of himself like a leopard. I made several American friends at that Inn, who all called Mont Blanc, Mount Blank—except one good-humored gentleman, of a very sociable nature, who became on such intimate terms with it that he spoke of it familiarly as "Blank;" observing at breakfast, "Blank looks pretty tall this morning;" or considerably doubting in the court-yard in the evening, whether there warn't some go-ahead naters in our country, sir, that would make out the top of Blank in a couple of hours from first start—now!

(Once, I passed a fortnight at an Inn in the North of England where I was heartied by

the ghost of a tremendous pie. It was a Yorkshire pie, like a fort—an abandoned fort with nothing in it; but the waiter had a fixed idea that it was a point of ceremony at every meal, to put the pie off the table. After some days, I tried to hint, in several delicate ways, that I considered the pie done with; as, for example, by emptying fag-ends of glasses of wine into it; putting cheese-plates and spoons into it, as into a basket; putting wine-bottles into it, as into a cooler; but always in vain, the pie being invariably cleaned out again and brought up as before. At last, beginning to be doubtful whether I was not the victim of a spectral illusion, and whether my health and spirits might not sink under the horrors of an imaginary pie, I cut a triangle out of it, fully as large as the musical instrument of that name in a powerful orchestra. Human prevision could not have foreseen the result—but the waiter mended the pie. With some effectual species of cement, he adroitly fitted the triangle in again, and I paid my reckoning and fled.

The Holly-Tree was getting rather dismal. I made an overland expedition beyond the screen, and penetrated as far as the fourth window. Here, I was driven back by stress of weather. Arrived at my winter quarters once more, I made up the fire, and took another Inn.

It was in the remotest part of Cornwall. A great annual Miners' Feast was being holden at the Inn, when I and my travelling companions presented ourselves at night among the wild crowd that were dancing before it by torchlight. We had had a break-down in the dark, on a stony morass some miles away; and I had the honor of leading one of the unharnessed post-horses. If any lady or gentleman on perusal of the present lines, will take any very tall post-horse with his traces hanging, about his legs, and will conduct him by the bearing-rein into the heart of a country dance of a hundred and fifty couples, that lady or gentleman will then, and only then, form an adequate idea of the extent to which that post-horse will tread on his conductor's toes. Over and above which, the post-horse, finding three hundred people whirling about him, will probably rear, and also lash out with his hind legs, in a manner incompatible with dignity or self-respect on his conductor's part. With such little drawbacks on my usually impressive aspect, I appeared at this Cornish Inn, to the unutterable wonder of the Cornish Miners. It was full, and twenty times full, and nobody could be received but the post-horse—though to get rid of that noble animal was something. While my fellow-travellers and I were discussing how to pass the night and so much of the next day as must intervene before the jovial blacksmith and the jovial wheelwright would be in a condition to go out on the morass and mend the coach, an honest man stepped forth

from the crowd and proposed his suit. It was of two rooms, with supper of eggs and innale and punch. We joyfully accompanied him home to the strangest of clean houses, where we were well entertained to the satisfaction of all parties. But, the novel feature of the entertainment was, that our host was a chairmaker, and that the chairs assigned to us were mere frames, altogether without bottoms of any sort; so that we passed the evening on perches. Nor was this the absurdest consequence; for when we were absent at supper, and any one of us gave way to laughter, he forgot the peculiarity of his position, and instantly disappeared. I myself, doubled up into an attitude from which self-extrication was impossible, was taken out of my frame, like a Clown in a comic pantomime who has tumbled into a tub, five times by the taper's light during the eggs and bacon.

The Holly-Tree was fast reviving within me a sense of loneliness. I began to feel conscious that my subject would never carry me on until I was dug out. I might be a week here—weeks!

There was a story with a singular idea in it, connected with an Inn I once passed a night at, in a picturesque old town on the Welch border. In a large, double-bedded room of this Inn, there had been a suicide committed by poison, in one bed, while a tired traveller slept unconscious in the other. After that time, the suicide bed was never used, but the other constantly was; the disused bedstead remaining in the room empty, though as to all other respects in its old state. The story ran, that whosoever slept in this room, though never so entire a stranger, from never so far off, was invariably observed to come down in the morning with an impression that he smelt Laudanum; and that his mind always turned upon the subject of suicide; to which, whatever kind of man he might be, he was certain to make some reference if he conversed with any one. This went on for years, until it at length induced the landlord to take the disused bedstead down, and bodily burn it—bed, hangings, and all. The strange influence (this was the story), now changed to a fainter one, but never changed afterwards. The occupant of that room, with occasional but very rare exceptions, would come down in the morning, trying to recall a forgotten dream he had had in the night. The landlord, on his mentioning his perplexity, would suggest various common-place subjects, not one of which, as he very well knew, was the true subject. But the moment the landlord suggested "Poison," the traveller started, and cried "Yes!" He never failed to accept that suggestion, and he never recalled any more of the dream.

This reminiscence brought the Welch Inns in general, before me; with the women on their round hats, and the harpers with their white beards (venerable, but humbugs, I am afraid), playing outside the door while I took

my dinner. The transition was natural to the "Highland Inns" with the oatmeal bannocks, the hony, the venison steaks, the trout from the loch, the whiskey, and perhaps (having the materials so temptingly at hand) the Athol brose. Once, was I coming south from the Scottish Highlands in hot haste, hoping to change quickly at the station at the bottom of a certain wild historical glen, when these eyes did with mortification see the landlord come out with a telescope and sweep the whole prospect for the horses: which horses were away picking up their own living, and did not heave in sight under four hours. Having thought of the loch-trout I was taken by quick association to the Anglers' Inns of England (I have assisted at innumerable feasts of angling, by lying in the bottom of the boat, whole summer days, doing nothing with the greatest perseverance: which I have generally found to be as effectual towards the taking of fish as the finest tackle and the utmost science); and to the pleasant white, clean, flower-pot-decorated bed-rooms of those inns, overlooking the river, and the ferry, and the green ait, and the church-spire, and the country bridge; and to the peerless Emma with the bright eyes and the pretty smile, who waited, bless her! with a natural grace that would have converted Blue Beard. Casting my eyes upon my Holly-Tree fire, I next discerned among the glowing coals, the pictures of a score or more of those wonderful English posting-inns which we are all so sorry to have lost, which were so large and so comfortable, and which were such monuments of British submission to rapacity and extortion. He who would see these houses pining away, let him walk from Basingstoke or even Windsor to London, by way of Hounslow, and moralise on their perishing remains; the stables crumbling to dust; unsettled laborers and wanderers bivouacing in the outhouses; grass growing in the yards; the rooms where erst so many hundred beds of down were made up, let off to Irish lodgers at eighteen-pence a-week; a little ill-looking beer-shop shrinking in the tap of former days, burning coach-house gates for fire-wood, having one of its two windows bunged up, as if it had received punishment in a fight with the Railroad; a low, bandy-legged, brick-making bulldog standing in the door-way. What could I next see in my fire, so naturally, as the new railway-house of these times near the dismal country station; with nothing particular on draught but cold air and damp, nothing worth mentioning in the larder but new mortar, and no business doing, beyond a concealed affectation of luggage in the hall? Then, I came to the Inns of Paris, with the pretty appartement of four pieces up one hundred and seventy-five waxed stairs, the privilege of ringing the bell all day long, without influencing anybody's mind or body but your own, and

the! not-too-much-for-dinner, considering the price. Next, to the provincial Inns of France, with the great church-tower rising above the courtyard, the horse-bells jingling merrily up and down the street beyond, and the clocks of all descriptions in all the rooms, which are never right, unless taken at the precise minute when by getting exactly twelve hours too fast or too slow, they unintentionally become so. Away I went, next, to the lesser road-side Inns of Italy; where all the dirty clothes in the house (not in wear) are always lying in your ante-room; where the mosquitoes make a raisin pudding of your face in summer, and the cold bites it blue in winter; where you get what you can, and forget what you can't; where I should again like to be boiling my tea in a pocket-handkerchief dumpling, for want of a tea-pot. So, to the old palace Inns and old monastery Inns, in towns and cities of the same bright country; with their massive quadrangular stair-cases whence you may look from among clustering pillars high into the blue vault of Heaven; with their stately banqueting-rooms, and vast refectories; with their labyrinths of ghostly bed-chambers, and their glimpses into gorgeous streets that have no appearance of reality or possibility. So, to the close little Inns of the Malaria districts, with their pale attendants, and their peculiar smell of never letting in the air. So, to the immense fantastic Inns of Venice, with the cry of the gondolier below, as he skims the corner; the grip of the watery odors on one particular little bit of the bridge of your nose (which is never released while you stay there); and the great bell of St. Mark's Cathedral tolling midnight. Next, I put up for a minute at the restless Inns upon the Rhine, where your going to bed, no matter at what hour, appears to be the tocsin for everybody else's getting up; and where, in the table d'hôte room at the end of the long table (with several Towers of Babel on it at the other end, all made of white plates), one knot of stoutish men, entirely drest in jewels and dirt, and having nothing else upon them, will remain all night, clinking glasses, and singing about the river that flows and the grape that grows and Rhine wine that beguiles and Rhine woman that smiles and hi drink drink my friend and ho drink drink my brother, and all the rest of it. I departed thence, as a matter of course, to other German Inns, where all the eatables are sodden down to the same flavor, and where the mind is disturbed by the apparition of hot puddings, and boiled cherries sweet and slab, at awfully unexpected periods of the repast. After a draught of sparkling beer from a foaming glass jug, and a glance of recognition through the windows of the student beer-houses at Heidelberg and elsewhere, I put out to sea for the Inns of America, with their four hundred beds a-piece, and their eight or nine hundred ladies and gentlemen at dinner every day. Again, I stood in the bar

roomer thereof, taking my evening cobbler, julep, sling, or cocktail. Again, I listened to my friend the General—whom I had known for five minutes, in the course of which period he had made me intimate for life with two Majors, who again had made me intimate for life with three Colonels, who again had made me brother to twenty-two civilians—again, I say, I listened to my friend the General, leisurely expounding the resources of the establishment, as to gentlemen's morning-room, sir; ladies' morning-room, sir; gentlemen's evening-room, sir; ladies' evening-room, sir; ladies' and gentlemen's evening reuniting-room, sir; music-room, sir; reading room, sir; over four-hundred sleeping-rooms, sir; and the entire planned and fitted within twelve calendar months from the first clearing off of the old incumbrances on the plot, at a cost of five hundred thousand dollars, sir. Again I found, as to my individual way of thinking, that the greater, the more gorgeous, and the more dollarous, the establishment was, the less desirable it was. Nevertheless, again I drank my cobbler, julep, sling, or cocktail, in all good-will, to my friend the General, and my friends the Majors, Colonels, and civilians, all; full-well knowing that whatever little motes my beamy eyes may have descried in theirs, they belong to a kind, generous, large-hearted, and great people.

I had been going on lately, at a quick pace, to keep my solitude out of my mind; but, here I broke down for good, and gave up the subject. What was I to do? What was to become of me? Into what extremity was I submissively to sink? Supposing that, like Baron Trenck, I looked out for a mouse or spider, and found one, and beguiled my imprisonment by training it? Even that might be dangerous with a view to the future. I might be so far gone when the road did come to be cut through the snow, that, on my way forth, I might burst into tears, and beseech, like the prisoner who was released in his old age from the Bastille, to be taken back again to the five windows, the ten curtains, and the sinuous drapery.

A desperate idea came into my head. Under any other circumstances I should have rejected it; but, in the strait at which I was, I held it fast. Could I so far overcome the inherent bashfulness which withheld me from the landlord's table and the company I might find there, as to make acquaintance, under various pretences, with some of the inmates of the house, singly—with the object of getting from each, either a whole autobiography, or a passage or experience in one, with which I could cheat the tardy time: first of all by seeking out, then by listening to, then by remembering and writing down? Could I, I asked myself, so far overcome my retiring nature as to do this. I could. I would. I did.

The results of this conception I proceed to give, in the exact order in which I attained

them. I began my plan of operations at once, and, by slow approaches and after-overcoming many obstacles (all of my own making, I believe), reached the story of:

THE OSTLER.

I FIND an old man, fast asleep, in one of the stalls of the stable. It is mid-day, and rather a strange time for an ostler to devote to sleep. Something curious, too, about the man's face. A withered woe-begone face. The eyebrows painfully contracted; the mouth fast set, and drawn down at the corners; the hollow cheeks sadly, and, as I cannot help fancying, prematurely wrinkled; the scanty, grizzled hair, telling weakly its own tale of some past sorrow or suffering. How fast he draws his breath, too, for a man asleep! He is talking in his sleep.

"Wake up!" I hear him say, in a quick whisper through his fast-clenched teeth. "Wake up there! Murder! O Lord help me! Lord help me, alone in this place!"

He stops, and sighs again—moves one lean arm slowly, till it rests over his throat—shudders a little, and turns on his straw—the arm leaves his throat—the hand stretches itself out, and clutches at the side towards which he has turned, as if he fancied himself to be grasping at the edge of something. Is he waking? No—there is the whisper again; he is still talking in his sleep.

"Light grey eyes," he says now, "and a droop in the left eyelid. Yes! yes!—flaxen hair with a gold-yellow streak in it—all right, mother—fair, white arms with a down on them—little lady's hand, with a reddish look under the finger-nails—and the knife—always the cursed knife—first on one side, then on the other. Aha! you she-devil, where's the knife? Never mind, mother—too late now. I've promised to marry, and marry I must. Murder! wake up there! for God's sake, wake up!"

At the last words his voice rises, and he grows so restless on a sudden, that I draw back quietly to the door. I see him shudder on the straw—his withered face grows distorted—he throws up both his hands with a quick, hysterical gasp; they strike against the bottom of the manger under which he lies; the blow awakens him; I have just time to slip through the door, before his eyes are fairly open and his senses are his own again.

What I have seen and heard has so startled and shocked me that I feel my heart beating fast, as I softly and quickly retrace my steps across the inn-yard. The discomposure that is going on within me, apparently shows itself in my face; for, as I get back to the covered way leading to the Inn stairs, the landlord, who is just coming out of the house to ring some bell in the yard, stops astonished, and asks what is the matter with me. I tell him what I have just seen.

"Aha!" says the landlord, with an air of relief. "I understand now. Poor old chap! He was only dreaming his old dream over again. There's the queerest story—of a dreadful kind, too, mind you—connected with him and his dream, that ever was told."

I entreat the landlord to tell me the story. After a little hesitation, he complies with my request.

Some years ago, there lived in the suburbs of a large sea-port town, on the west coast of England, a man in humble circumstances, by name Isaac Scatchard. His means of subsistence were derived from any employment that he could get, as an ostler; and, occasionally, when times went well with him, from temporary engagements in service, as stable-helper in private houses. Though a faithful, steady, and honest man, he got on badly in his calling. His ill-luck was proverbial among his neighbours. He was always missing good opportunities, by no fault of his own; and always living longest in service with amiable people who were not punctual payers of wages. "Unlucky Isaac" was his nickname in his own neighbourhood—and no one could say that he did not richly deserve it.

With far more than one man's fair share of adversity to endure, Isaac had but one consolation to support him—and that was of the dreariest and most negative kind. He had no wife and children to increase his anxieties and add to the bitterness of his various failures in life. It might have been from mere insensibility, or it might have been from generous unwillingness to involve another in his own unlucky destiny—but the fact undoubtedly was, that he arrived at the middle term of life without marrying; and, what is much more remarkable, without once exposing himself, from eighteen to eight and thirty, to the genial imputation of ever having had a sweetheart. When he was out of service, he lived alone with his widowed mother. Mrs. Scatchard was a woman above the average in her lowly station, as to capacities and manners. She had seen better days, as the phrase is; but she never referred to them in the presence of curious visitors; and, though perfectly polite to every one who approached her, never cultivated any intimacies among her neighbours. She contrived to provide, hardly enough, for her simple wants, by doing rough work for the tailors; and always managed to keep a decent home for her son to return to, whenever his ill-luck drove him out, help, less into the world.

One bleak autumn, when Isaac was getting on fast towards forty, and when he was, as usual, out of place, through no fault of his own, he set forth from his mother's cottage on a long walk inland to a gentleman's seat, where he had heard that a stable-helper was required. It wanted then but two days of his birth-

day; and Mrs. Scatchard, with her usual fondness, made him promise, before he started, that he would be back in time to keep that anniversary with her, in as festive a way as their poor means would allow. It was easy for him to comply with this request, even supposing he slept a night each way on the road. He was to start from home on Monday morning; and, whether he got the new place or not, he was to be back for his birthday dinner on Wednesday at two o'clock.

Arriving at his destination too late on the Monday night to make application for the stable-helper's place, he slept at the village-inn, and, in good time on the Tuesday morning, presented himself at the gentleman's house, to fill the vacant situation. Here, again, his ill-luck pursued him as inexorably as ever. The excellent written testimonials, as to character, which he was able to produce, availed him nothing; his long walk had been taken in vain—only the day before, the stable-helper's place had been given to another man.

Isaac accepted this new disappointment resignedly, and as a matter of course. Naturally slow in capacity, he had the bluntness of sensibility and phlegmatic patience of disposition which frequently distinguish men with sluggishly-working mental powers. He thanked the gentleman's steward, with his usual quiet civility, for granting him an interview, and took his departure with no appearance of unusual depression in his face or manner. Before starting on his homeward walk, he made some enquiries at the inn, and ascertained that he might save a few miles, on his return, by following a new road. Furnished with full instructions, several times repeated, as to the various turnings he was to take, he set forth for his homeward journey, and walked on all day with only one stoppage for bread and cheese. Just as it was getting towards dark, the rain came on and the wind began to rise; and he found himself, to make matters worse, in a part of the country with which he was entirely unacquainted, though he knew himself to be some fifteen miles from home. The first house he found to inquire at was a lonely road-side inn, standing on the outskirts of a thick wood. Solitary as the place looked, it was welcome to a lost man who was also hungry, thirsty, footsore, and wet. The landlord was a civil, respectable-looking man; and the price he asked for a bed was reasonable enough. Isaac, therefore, decided on stopping comfortably at the inn for that night.

He was constitutionally a temperate man. His supper simply consisted of two rashers of bacon, a slice of home-made bread, and a pint of ale. He did not go to bed immediately after this moderate meal, but sat up with the landlord talking about his bad prospects and his long run of ill-luck, and diverging from these topics to the subject of horse-flesh and racing. Nothing was said either by himself, his host,

or the few labourers who strayed into the tap-room, which could, in the slightest degree, excite the very small and very dull imaginative faculty which Isaac Scatchard possessed.

At a little after eleven the house was closed. Isaac went round with the landlord and held the candle while the doors and lower-windows were being secured. He noticed with surprise the strength of the bolts, bars, and iron-sheathed shutters.

"You see, we are rather lonely here," said the landlord. "We never have had any attempts made to break in yet, but it's always as well to be on the safe side. When nobody is sleeping here, I am the only man in the house. My wife and daughter are timid, and the servant-girl takes after her missuses. Another glass of ale, before you turn in?—No!—Well, how such a sober man as you comes to be out of place is more than I can make out, for one.—Here's where you're to sleep. You're our only lodger to-night, and I think you'll say my missus has done her best to make you comfortable. You're quite sure you won't have another glass of ale?—Very well. Good night."

It was half-past eleven by the clock in the passage as they went up-stairs to the bedroom, the window of which looked on to the wood at the back of the house. Isaac locked the door, set his candle on the chest of drawers, and wearily got ready for bed. The bleak autumn wind was still blowing, and the solemn, monotonous, surging moan of it in the wood was dreary and awful to hear through the night-silence. Isaac felt strangely wakeful, and resolved, as he lay down in bed, to keep the candle a-light until he began to grow sleepy; for there was something unendurably depressing in the bare idea of lying awake in the darkness, listening to the dismal, ceaseless moaning of the wind in the wood.

Sleep stole on him before he was aware of it. His eyes closed, and he fell off insensibly to rest, without having so much as thought of extinguishing the candle.

The first sensation of which he was conscious after sinking into slumber, was a strange shivering that ran through him suddenly from head to foot, and a dreadful sinking pain at the heart, such as he had never felt before. The shivering only disturbed his slumbers—the pain woke him instantly. In one moment he passed from a state of sleep to a state of wakefulness—his eyes wide open—his mental perceptions cleared on a sudden as if by a miracle.

The candle had burnt down nearly to the last morsel of tallow; but the top of the unsmuffed wick had just fallen off, and the light in the little room was, for the moment, fair and full. Between the foot of his bed and the closed door there stood a woman with a knife in her hand, looking at him. He was stricken speechless with terror, but he did not

lose the preternatural clearness of his faculties; and he never took his eyes off the woman. She said not one word as they stared each other in the face; but she began to move slowly towards the left-hand side of the bed.

His eyes followed her. She was a fair, fine woman, with yellowish flaxen hair, and light grey eyes, with a droop in the left eyelid. He noticed those things and fixed them on his mind, before she was round at the side of the bed. Speechless, with no expression in her face, with no noise following her footfall,—she came closer and closer—stopped—and slowly raised the knife. He laid his right arm over his throat to save it; but, as he saw the knife coming down, threw his hand across the bed to the right side, and jerked his body over that way, just as the knife descended on the mattress within an inch of his shoulder.

His eyes fixed on her arm and hand, as she slowly drew the knife out of the bed. A white, well-shaped arm, with a pretty down lying lightly over the fair skin. A delicate, lady's hand, with the crowning beauty of a pink flush under and round the finger-nails.

She drew the knife out, and passed back again slowly to the foot of the bed; stopped there for a moment looking at him; then came on—still speechless, still with no expression on the blank, beautiful face, still with no sound following the stealthy footfalls—came on to the right side of the bed where he now lay. As she approached, she raised the knife again, and he drew himself away to the left side. She struck, as before, right into the mattress, with a deliberate, perpendicularly-downward action of the arm. This time his eyes wandered from her to the knife. It was like the large clasp knives which he had often seen labouring men use to cut their bread and bacon with. Her delicate little fingers did not conceal more than two thirds of the handle; he noticed that it was made of buck-horn, clean and shining as the blade was, and looking like new.

For the second time she drew the knife out, concealed it in the wide sleeve of her gown, then stopped by the bedside, watching him. For an instant he saw her standing in that position—then the wick of the spent candle fell over into the socket. The flame diminished to a little blue point, and the room grew dark. A moment, or less, if possible, passed so—and then the wick flamed up, smokily, for the last time. His eyes were still looking eagerly over the right-hand side of the bed when the final flash of light came, but they discerned nothing. The fair woman with the knife was gone.

The conviction that he was alone again, weakened the hold of the terror that had struck him dumb up to this time. The preternatural sharpness which the very intensity of his panic had mysteriously imparted

to his faculties, left them suddenly. His brain grew confused—his heart beat wildly—his ears opened for the first time since the appearance of the woman, to a sense of the woful, ceaseless moaning of the wind among the trees. With the dreadful conviction of the reality of what he had seen, still strong within him, he leapt out of bed, and screaming—"Murder!—Wake up, there, wake up!"—dashed headlong through the darkness to the door.

It was fast locked, exactly as he had left it on going to bed.

His cries on starting up, had alarmed the house. He heard the terrified, confused, exclamations of women; he saw the master of the house approaching along the passage, with his burning rush-candle in one hand and his gun in the other.

"What is it?" asked the landlord, breathlessly.

Isaac could only answer in a whisper: "A woman, with a knife in her hand," he gasped out. "In my room—a fair, yellow-haired woman; she jobbed at me with the knife, twice over."

The landlord's pale cheeks grew paler. He looked at Isaac eagerly by the flickering light of his candle; and his face began to get red again—his voice altered, too, as well as his complexion.

"She seems to have missed you twice," he said.

"I dodged the knife as it came down," Isaac went on, in the same scared whisper. "It struck the bed each time."

The landlord took his candle into the bedroom immediately. In less than a minute he came out again into the passage in a violent passion.

"The devil fly away with you and your woman with the knife! What do you mean by coming into a man's place and frightening his family out of their wits about a dream?"

"I'll leave your house," said Isaac, faintly. "Better out on the road, in rain and dark, on my way home, than back again in that room after what I've seen in it. Lend me a light to get on my clothes by, and tell me what I'm to pay."

"Pay!" cried the landlord, leading the way with his light sulkily into the bedroom. "You'll find your score on the slate when you go down stairs. I wouldn't have taken you in for all the money you've got about you, if I'd known your dreaming, screeching ways beforehand. Look at the bed. Where's the cut of a knife in it? Look at the window—is the lock bursted? Look at the door (which I heard you fasten myself)—is it broke in? A murdering woman with a knife in my house! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Isaac answered not a word. He huddled on his clothes; and then they went down stairs together.

"Nigh on twenty minutes past two!" said

the landlord, as they passed the clock. "A nice time in the morning to frighten honest people out of their wits!"

Isaac paid his bill, and the landlord let him out at the front door, asking, with a grin of contempt, as he undid the strong fastenings, whether "the murdering woman got in that way?" They parted without a word on either side. The rain had ceased; but the night was dark, and the wind bleaker than ever. Little did the darkness, or the cold, or the uncertainty about his way home, matter to Isaac. If he had been turned out into a wilderness in a thunder-storm, it would have been a relief, after what he had suffered in the bedroom of the inn.

What was the fair woman with the knife? The creature of a dream, or that other creature from the unknown world called among men by the name of ghost? He could make nothing of the mystery—had made nothing of it, even when it was mid-day on Wednesday, and when he stood, at last, after many times missing his road, once more on the doorstep of home.

His mother came out eagerly to receive him. His face told her in a moment that something was wrong.

"I've lost the place; but that's my luck. I dreamed an ill dream last night, mother—or, may be, I saw a ghost. Take it either way, it scared me out of my senses, and I'm not my own man again yet."

"Isaac! your face frightens me. Come in to the fire. Come in, and tell mother all about it."

He was as anxious to tell as she was to hear; for it had been his hope, all the way home, that his mother, with her quicker capacity and superior knowledge, might be able to throw some light on the mystery which he could not clear up for himself. His memory of the dream was still mechanically vivid, though his thoughts were entirely confused by it.

His mother's face grew paler and paler as he went on. She never interrupted him by so much as a single word; but when he had done, she moved her chair close to his, put her arm round his neck, and said to him:

"Isaac, you dreamed your ill dream on this Wednesday morning. What time was it when you saw the fair woman with the knife in her hand?"

Isaac reflected on what the landlord had said when they passed by the clock on his leaving the inn—allowed as nearly as he could for the time that must have elapsed between the unlocking of his bedroom door and the paying of his bill just before going away, and answered:

"Somewhere about two o'clock in the morning."

His mother suddenly quitted her hold of his neck, and struck her hands together with a gesture of despair.

"This Wednesday is your birthday, Isaac;

and two o'clock in the morning was the time when you were born!"

Isaac's capacities were not quick enough to catch the infection of his mother's superstitious dread. He was amazed and a little startled also, when she suddenly rose from her chair, opened her old writing-desk, took out pen and ink and paper, and then said to him:

"Your memory is but a poor one, Isaac, and now I'm an old woman, mine's not much better. I want all about this dream of yours to be as well known to both of us, years hence, as it is now. Tell me over again all you told me a minute ago, when you spoke of what the woman with the knife looked like."

Isaac obeyed, and marvelled much as he saw his mother carefully set down on paper the very words that he was saying. "Light grey eyes," she wrote, as they came to the descriptive part, "with a droop in the left eyelid. Flaxen hair, with a gold-yellow streak in it. White arms, with a down on them. Little lady's hand, with a reddish look about the finger-nails. Clasp knife with a buck-horn handle, that seemed as good as new." To these particulars, Mrs. Scatchard added the year, month, day of the week, and time in the morning, when the woman of the dream appeared to her son. She then locked up the paper carefully in her writing-desk.

Neither on that day, nor on any day after, could her son induce her to return to the matter of the dream. She obstinately kept her thoughts about it to herself, and even refused to refer again to the paper in her writing-desk. Ere long, Isaac grew weary of attempting to make her break her resolute silence; and time, which sooner or later, wears out all things, gradually wore out the impression produced on him by the dream. He began by thinking of it carelessly, and he ended by not thinking of it at all. This result was the more easily brought about by the advent of some important changes for the better in his prospects, which commenced not long after his terrible night's experience at the inn. He reaped at last the reward of his long and patient suffering under adversity, by getting an excellent place, keeping it for seven years, and leaving it, on the death of his master, not only with an excellent character, but also with a comfortable annuity bequeathed to him as a reward for saving his mistress's life in a carriage accident. Thus it happened that Isaac Scatchard returned to his old mother, seven years after the time of the dream at the inn, with an annual sum of money at his disposal, sufficient to keep them both in ease and independence for the rest of their lives.

The mother, whose health had been bad of late years, profited so much by the care bestowed on her and by freedom from money anxieties, that when Isaac's next birthday came round, she was able to sit up comfortably at table and dine with him.

On that day, as the evening drew on, Mrs. Scatchard discovered that a bottle of tonic medicine—which she was accustomed to take, and in which she had fancied that a dose or more was still left—happened to be empty. Isaac immediately volunteered to go to the chemist's, and get it filled again. It was as rainy and bleak an autumn night as on the memorable past occasion when he lost his way and slept at the roadside inn.

On going into the chemist's shop, he was passed hurriedly by a poorly-dressed woman coming out of it. The glimpse he had of her face struck him, and he looked back after her as she descended the door-steps.

"You're noticing that woman?" said the chemist's apprentice behind the counter. "It's my opinion there's something wrong with her. She's been asking for laudanum to put to a bad tooth. Master's out for half an hour; and I told her I wasn't allowed to sell poison to strangers in his absence. She laughed in a queer way, and said she would come back in half an hour. If she expects master to serve her, I think she'll be disappointed. It's a case of suicide, sir, if ever there was one yet."

These words added immeasurably to the sudden interest in the woman which Isaac had felt at the first sight of her face. After he had got the medicine-bottle filled, he looked about anxiously for her, as soon as he was out in the street. She was walking slowly up and down on the opposite side of the road. With his heart, very much to his own surprise, beating fast, Isaac crossed over and spoke to her.

He asked if she was in any distress. She pointed to her torn shawl, her scanty dress, her crushed, dirty bonnet—then moved under a lamp so as to let the light fall on her stern, pale, but still most beautiful face.

"I look like a comfortable, happy woman—don't I?" she said with a bitter laugh.

She spoke with a purity of intonation which Isaac had never heard before from other than ladies' lips. Her slightest actions seemed to have the easy negligent grace of a thorough-bred woman. Her skin, for all its poverty-stricken paleness, was as delicate as if her life had been passed in the enjoyment of every social comfort that wealth can purchase. Even her small, finely-shaped hands, gloveless as they were, had not lost their whiteness.

Little by little, in answer to his question, the sad story of the woman came out. There is no need to relate it here; it is told over and over again in Police Reports and paragraphs about Attempted Suicides.

"My name is Rebecca Murdock," said the woman, as she ended. "I have ninepence left, and I thought of spending it at the chemist's over the way in securing a passage to the other world. Whatever it is, it can't be worse to me than this—so why should I stop here?"

Besides the natural compassion and sadness moved in his heart by what he heard, Isaac felt within him some mysterious influence at work all the time the woman was speaking, which utterly confused his ideas and almost deprived him of his powers of speech. All that he could say in answer to her last reckless words was, that he would prevent her from attempting her own life, if he followed her about all night to do it. His rough, trembling earnestness seemed to impress her.

"I won't occasion you that trouble," she answered, when he repeated his threat. "You have given me a fancy for living by speaking kindly to me. No need for the mockery of protestations and promises. You may believe me without them. Come to Fuller's Meadow to-morrow at twelve, and you will find me alive, to answer for myself. No!—no money. My ninetence will do to get me as good a night's lodging as I want."

She nodded and left him. He made no attempt to follow—he felt no suspicion that she was deceiving him.

"It's strange, but I can't help believing her," he said to himself—and walked away, bewildered, towards home.

On entering the house his mind was still so completely absorbed by its new subject of interest, that he took no notice of what his mother was doing when he came in with the bottle of medicine. She had opened her old writing-desk in his absence, and was now reading a paper attentively that lay inside it. On every birthday of Isaac's since she had written down the particulars of his dream from his own lips, she had been accustomed to read that same paper, and ponder over it in private.

The next day he went to Fuller's Meadow. He had done only right in believing her so implicitly—she was there, punctual to a minute, to answer for herself. The last-left faint defences in Isaac's heart against the fascination which a word or look from her began inscrutably to exercise over him, sank down and vanished before her for ever on that memorable morning.

When a man, previously insensible to the influence of women, forms an attachment in middle life, the instances are rare indeed, let the warning circumstances be what they may, in which he is found capable of freeing himself from the tyranny of the new ruling passion. The charm of being spoken to familiarly, fondly, and gratefully by a woman whose language and manners still retained enough of their early refinement to hint at the high social station that she had lost, would have been a dangerous luxury to a man of Isaac's rank at the age of twenty. But it was far more than that—it was certain ruin to him—now that his heart was opening unworthily to a new influence, at that middle time of life when strong feelings of all kinds, once implanted, strike root most stubbornly

in a man's moral nature. A few more stolen interviews after that first morning in Fuller's Meadow completed his infatuation. In less than a month from the time when he first met her, Isaac Scatchard had consented to give Rebecca Murdoch a new interest in existence, and a chance of recovering the character she had lost, by promising to make her his wife.

She had taken possession, not of his passions only, but of his faculties as well. All arrangements for the present and all plans for the future were of her devising. All the mind he had he put into her keeping. She directed him on every point; even instructing him how to break the news of his approaching marriage in the safest manner to his mother.

"If you tell her how you met me and who I am at first," said the cunning woman, "she will move heaven and earth to prevent our marriage. Say I am the sister of one of your fellow-servants—ask her to see me before you go into any more particulars—and leave it to me to do the rest. I want to make her love me next best to you, Isaac, before she knows anything of who I really am."

The motive of the deceit was sufficient to sanctify it to Isaac. The stratagem proposed relieved him of his one great anxiety, and quieted his uneasy conscience on the subject of his mother. Still, there was something wanting to perfect his happiness, something that he could not realise, something mysteriously untraceable, and yet, something that perpetually made itself felt; not when he was absent from Rebecca Murdoch, but, strange to say, when he was actually in her presence! She was kindness itself with him; she never made him feel his inferior capacities, and inferior manners,—she showed the sweetest anxiety to please him in the smallest trifles; but, in spite of all these attractions, he never could feel quite at his ease with her. At their first meeting, there had mingled with his admiration when he looked in her face, a faint involuntary feeling of doubt whether that face was entirely strange to him. No after familiarity had the slightest effect on this inexplicable, wearisome uncertainty.

Concealing the truth as he had been directed, he announced his marriage engagement precipitately and confusedly to his mother, on the day when he contracted it. Poor Mrs. Scatchard showed her perfect confidence in her son by flinging her arms round his neck, and giving him joy of having found at last, in the sister of one of his fellow-servants, a woman to comfort and care for him after his mother was gone. She was all eagerness to see the woman of her son's choice; and the next day was fixed for the introduction.

It was a bright sunny morning, and the little cottage parlour was full of light, as Mrs. Scatchard, happy and expectant, dressed for the occasion in her Sunday gown,

sat, waiting for her son and her future daughter-in-law. Punctual to the appointed time, Isaac hurriedly and nervously led his promised wife into the room. His mother rose to receive her—advanced a few steps, smiling—looked Rebecca full in the eyes—and suddenly stopped. Her face, which had been flushed the moment before, turned white in an instant—her eyes lost their expression of softness and kindness, and assumed a black look of terror—her outstretched hands fell to her sides, and she staggered back a few steps with a low cry to her son.

"Isaac!" she whispered, clutching him fast by the arm, when he asked alarmingly if she was taken ill. "Isaac! Does that woman's face remind you of nothing?"

Before he could answer; before he could look round to where Rebecca, astonished and angered by her reception, stood, at the lower end of the room; his mother pointed impatiently to her writing-desk, and gave him the key.

"Open it," she said, in a quick, breathless whisper.

"What does this mean? Why am I treated as if I had no business here? Does your mother want to insult me?" asked Rebecca, angrily.

"Open it, and give me the paper in the left-hand drawer. Quick! quick, for Heaven's sake!" said Mrs. Scatchard, shrinking further back in terror. Isaac gave her the paper. She looked it over eagerly for a moment—then followed Rebecca, who was now turning away haughtily to leave the room, and caught her by the shoulder—abruptly raised the long, loose sleeve of her gown, and glanced at her hand and arm. Something like fear began to steal over the angry expression of Rebecca's face as she shook herself free from the old woman's grasp. "Mad!" she said to herself; "and Isaac never told me." With these few words she left the room.

Isaac was hastening after her when his mother turned and stopped his further progress. It wrung his heart to see the misery and terror in her face as she looked at him.

"Light grey eyes," she said, in low, mournful, awe-struck tones, pointing towards the open door. "A droop in the left eyelid. Flaxen hair with a gold-yellow streak in it. White arms with a down on them. Little, lady's hand, with a reddish look under the finger-nails. *The woman of the dream!*—Oh, Heaven! Isaac, the woman of the dream!"

That faint cleaving doubt which he had never been able to shake off in Rebecca Murdoch's presence, was fatally set at rest for ever. He had seen her face, then, before—seven years before, on his birthday, in the bedroom of the lonely inn. "The woman of the dream!"

"Be warned, Oh, my son! be warned! Isaac! Isaac! let her go, and do you stop with me!"

Something darkened the parlour window, as those words were said. A sudden chill ran through him; and he glanced sidelong at the shadow. Rebecca Murdoch had come back. She was peering in curiously at them over the low window blind.

"I have promised to marry, mother," he said, "and marry I must."

The tears came into his eyes as he spoke, and dimmed his sight; but he could just discern the fatal face outside moving away again from the window.

His mother's head sank lower.

"Are you faint?" he whispered.

"Broken-hearted, Isaac."

He stooped down and kissed her. The shadow, as he did so, returned to the window; and the fatal face peered in curiously once more.

Three weeks after that day, Isaac and Rebecca were man and wife. All that was hopelessly dogged and stubborn in the man's moral nature, seemed to have closed round his fatal passion, and to have fixed it unsailably in his heart.

After that first interview in the cottage parlour, no consideration would induce Mrs. Scatchard to see her son's wife again, or even to talk of her when Isaac tried hard to plead her cause after their marriage. This course of conduct was not in any degree occasioned by a discovery of the degradation in which Rebecca had lived. There was no question of that between mother and son. There was no question of anything but the fearfully exact resemblance between the living breathing woman and the spectre woman of Isaac's dream. Rebecca, on her side, neither felt nor expressed the slightest sorrow at the estrangement between herself and her mother-in-law. Isaac, for the sake of peace, had never contradicted her first idea that age and long illness had affected Mrs. Scatchard's mind. He even allowed his wife to upbraid him for not having confessed this to her at the time of their marriage engagement, rather than risk anything by hinting at the truth. The sacrifice of his integrity before his one all-mastering delusion, seemed but a small thing, and cost his conscience but little, after the sacrifices he had already made.

The time of waking from his delusion—the cruel and the rueful time—was not far off. After some quiet months of married life, as the summer was ending, and the year was getting on towards the month of his birthday, Isaac found his wife altering towards him. She grew sullen and contemptuous—she formed acquaintances of the most dangerous kind, in defiance of his objections, his entreaties, and his commands,—and, worst of all, she learnt, ere long, after every fresh difference with her husband, to seek the deadly self-oblivion of drink. Little by little, after the first miserable discovery that his wife was keeping company with drunkards, the shocking certainty forced itself on Isaac

that she had grown to be a drunkard herself.

He had been in a sadly desponding state for some time before the occurrence of these domestic calamities. His mother's health, as he could but too plainly discern every time he went to see her at the cottage, was failing fast; and he upbraided himself in secret as the cause of the bodily and mental suffering she endured. When, to his remorse on his mother's account, was added the shame and misery occasioned by the discovery of his wife's degradation, he sank under the double trial—his face began to alter fast, and he looked what he was, a spirit-broken man. His mother, still struggling bravely against the illness that was hurrying her to the grave, was the first to notice the sad alteration in him, and the first to hear of his last bitterest trouble with his wife. She could only weep bitterly, on the day when he made his humiliating confession; but on the next occasion when he went to see her, she had taken a resolution, in reference to his domestic afflictions, which astonished, and even alarmed him. He found her dressed to go out, and on asking the reason, received this answer:

"I am not long for this world, Isaac," said she; "and I shall not feel easy on my death-bed, unless I have done my best to the last, to make my son happy. I mean to put my own fears and my own feelings out of the question, and to go with you to your wife, and try what I can do to reclaim her. Give me your arm, Isaac; and let me do the last thing I can in this world to help my son before it is too late."

He could not disobey her: and they walked together slowly towards his miserable home. It was only one o'clock in the afternoon when they reached the cottage where he lived. It was their dinner hour, and Rebecca was in the kitchen. He was thus able to take his mother quietly into the parlour, and then prepare his wife for the interview. She had fortunately drank but little at that early hour, and she was less sullen and capricious than usual. He returned to his mother, with his mind tolerably at ease. His wife soon followed him into the parlour, and the meeting between her and Mrs. Scatchard passed off better than he had ventured to anticipate: though he observed, with secret apprehension, that his mother, resolutely as she controlled herself in other respects, could not look his wife in the face when she spoke to her. It was a relief to him, therefore, when Rebecca began to lay the cloth.

She laid the cloth—brought in the bread-tray, and cut a slice from the loaf for her husband—then returned to the kitchen. At that moment, Isaac, still anxiously watching his mother, was startled by seeing the same ghastly change pass over her face, which had altered it so awfully on the morning when Rebecca and she first met. Before he could

say a word she whispered with a look of horror:—

"Take me back!—home, home, again, Isaac! Come with me, and never come back again."

He was afraid to ask for an explanation,—he could only sign to her to be silent, and help her quickly to the door. As they passed the bread-tray on the table she stopped and pointed to it.

"Did you see what your wife cut your bread with?" she asked, in a low, still whisper.

"No, mother,—I was not noticing—what was it?"

"Look!"

He did look. A new clasp-knife, with a buck-horn handle lay with the loaf on the bread-tray. He stretched out his hand, shudderingly, to possess himself of it; but, at the same time, there was a noise in the kitchen, and his mother caught at his arm.

"The knife of the dream!—Isaac, I'm faint with fear—take me away! before she comes back!"

He was hardly able to support her—the visible, tangible reality of the knife struck him with a panic, and utterly destroyed any faint doubts that he might have entertained up to this time, in relation to the mysterious dream-warning of nearly eight years before. By a last desperate effort, he summoned self-possession enough to help his mother quietly out of the house,—so quietly, that the "dream-woman" (he thought of her by that name, now!) did not hear them departing, from the kitchen.

"Don't go back, Isaac,—don't go back!" implored Mrs. Scatchard, as he turned to go away, after seeing her safely seated again in her own room.

"I must get the knife," he answered, under his breath. She tried to stop him again; but he hurried out without another word.

On his return, he found that his wife had discovered their secret departure from the house. She had been drinking, and was in a fury of passion. The dinner in the kitchen was flung under the grate; the cloth was off the parlour-table. Where was the knife? Unwisely, he asked for it. She was only too glad of the opportunity of irritating him, which the request afforded her. "He wanted the knife, did he? Could he give her a reason why?—No!—Then he should not have it,—not if he went down on his knees to ask for it." Further recriminations elicited the fact that she had bought it a bargain—and that she considered it her own especial property. Isaac saw the uselessness of attempting to get the knife by fair means, and determined to search for it, later in the day, in secret. The search was unsuccessful. Night came on, and he left the house to walk about the streets. He was afraid now to sleep in the same room with her.

Three weeks passed. Still sullenly enraged with him, she would not give up the knife; and still that fear of sleeping in the same room with her, possessed him. He walked about at night, or dozed in the parlour, or sat watching by his mother's bed-side. Before the expiration of the first week in the new month his mother died. It wanted then but ten days' of her son's birthday. She had longed to live till that anniversary. Isaac was present at her death; and her last words in this world were addressed to him: "Don't go back, my son, don't go back!"

He was obliged to go back, if it were only to watch his wife. Exasperated to the last degree by his distrust of her, she had revengefully sought to add a sting to his grief, during the last days of his mother's illness, by declaring that she would assert her right to attend the funeral. In spite of all that he could do, or say, she held with wicked pertinacity to her word; and, on the day appointed for the burial, forced herself—infamed and shameless with drink—into her husband's presence, and declared that she would walk in the funeral procession to his mother's grave.

This last worst outrage, accompanied by all that was most insulting in word and look, maddened him for the moment. He struck her. The instant the blow was dealt, he repented it. She crouched down, silent in a corner of the room, and eyed him steadily; it was a look that cooled his hot blood, and made him tremble. But there was no time now to think of a means of making atonement. Nothing remained, but to risk the worst till the funeral was over. There was but one way of making sure of her. He locked her into her bed-room.

When he came back some hours after, he found her sitting, very much altered in look and bearing, by the bedside, with a bundle on her lap. She rose, and faced him quietly, and spoke with a strange stillness in her voice, a strange repose in her eyes, a strange composure in her manner.

"No man has ever struck me twice," she said, "and my husband shall have no second opportunity. Set the door open and let me go. From this day forth we see each other no more."

Before he could answer she passed him, and left the room. He saw her walk away up the street.

Would she return? All that night he watched and waited; but no footstep came near the house. The next night, overpowered by fatigue, he lay down in bed, in his clothes, with the door locked, the key on the table, and the candle burning. His slumber was not disturbed. The third night, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, passed, and nothing happened. He lay down on the seventh, still in his clothes, still with the door locked, the key on the table, and the candle burning; but easier in his mind.

Easier in his mind, and in perfect health of body, when he fell off to sleep. But his rest was disturbed. He woke twice, without any sensation of uneasiness. But the third time it was that never-to-be-forgotten shivering of the night at the lonely inn, that dreadful sinking pain at the heart, which once more aroused him in an instant.

His eyes opened towards the left hand side of the bed, and there stood—The woman of the dream, again?—No! His wife; the living reality, with the dream-spectre's face—in the dream-spectre's attitude; the fair arm up—the knife clasped in the delicate, white hand.

He sprang upon her, almost at the instant of seeing her, and yet not quickly enough to prevent her from hiding the knife. Without a word from him—without a cry from her—he pinioned her in a chair. With one hand he felt up her sleeve—and, there, where the dream-woman had hidden the knife, she had hidden it,—the knife with the buck-horn handle, that looked like new.

In the despair of that fearful moment his brain was steady, his heart was calm. He looked at her fixedly, with the knife in his hand, and said these last words:

"You told me we should see each other no more, and you have come back. It is my turn, now, to go, and to go for ever. I say that we shall see each other no more; and my word shall not be broken."

He left her, and set forth into the night. There was a bleak wind abroad, and the smell of recent rain was in the air. The distant church-clocks chimed the quarter as he walked rapidly beyond the last houses in the suburb. He asked the first policeman he met, what hour that was, of which the quarter past had just struck.

The man referred sleepily to his watch, and answered: "Two o'clock." Two in the morning. What day of the month was this day that had just begun? He reckoned it up from the date of his mother's funeral. The fatal parallel was complete—it was his birthday!

Had he escaped the mortal peril which his dream foretold? or had he only received a second warning? As that ominous doubt forced itself on his mind, he stopped, reflected, and turned back again towards the city. He was still resolute to hold to his word, and never to let her see him more; but there was a thought now in his mind of having her watched and followed. The knife was in his possession—the world was before him; but a new distrust of her—a vague, unspeakable, superstitious dread—had overcome him.

"I must know where she goes, now she thinks I have left her," he said to himself, as he stole back wearily to the precincts of his house.

It was still dark. He had left the candle burning in the parochial chamber: but when he

looked up at the window of the room now, there was no light in it. He crept cautiously to the house-door. On going away, he remembered to have closed it: on trying it now, he found it open.

He waited outside, never losing sight of the house, till daylight. Then he ventured in—doors—listened, and heard nothing—looked into kitchen, scullery, parlour; and found nothing: went up, at last, into the bedroom—it was empty. A pick-lock lay on the floor, betraying how she had gained entrance in the night; and that was the only trace of her.

Whither had she gone? That no mortal tongue could tell him. The darkness had covered her flight; and when the day broke, no man could say where the light found her.

Before leaving the house and the town for ever, he gave instructions to a friend and neighbour to sell his furniture for anything that it would fetch, and apply the proceeds to employing the police to trace her. The directions were honestly followed, and the money was all spent; but the enquiries led to nothing. The pick-lock on the bedroom floor remained the one last useless trace of her.

At this point of the narrative the landlord paused, and looked towards the stable-door.

"So far," he said, "I tell you what was told to me. The little that remains to be added lies within my own experience. Between two and three months after the events I have just been relating, Isaac Scatchard came to me, withered and old-looking before his time, just as you saw him to-day. He had his testimonials to character with him, and he asked for employment here. I gave him a trial, and liked him in spite of his queer habits. He is as sober, honest, and willing a man as there is in England. As for his restlessness at night, and his sleeping away his leisure time in the day, who can wonder at it after hearing his story? Besides, he never objects to being roused up, when he's wanted, so there's not much inconvenience to complain of, after all."

"I suppose he is afraid of waking out of that dreadful dream in the dark?" said I.

"No," returned the landlord. "The dream comes back to him so often, that he has got to bear with it by this time resignedly enough. It's his wife keeps him waking at night, as he has often told me."

"What! Has she never been heard of yet?"

"Never. Isaac himself has the one perpetual thought about her, that she is alive and looking for him. I believe he wouldn't let himself drop off to sleep towards two in the morning for a king's ransom. Two in the morning, he says, is the time when she will find him, one of these days. Two in the morning is the time all the year round, when he likes to be most certain that he has

got that clasp-knife safe about him. He does not mind being alone, as long as he is awake, except on the night before his birthday, when he firmly believes himself to be in peril of his life. The birthday has only come round once since he has been here; and then he sat up, along with the night-porter. 'She's looking for me,' he always says, when I speak to him on the one theme of his life; 'she's looking for me.' He may be right. She may be looking for him. Who can tell?"

"Who can tell!" said I.

THE BOOTS.

WHERE had he been in his time? he repeated when I asked him the question. Lord, he had been everywhere! And what had he been? Bless you, he had been everything you could mention a'most.

Seen a good deal? Why, of course he had. I should say so, he could assure me, if I only knew about a twentieth part of what had come in his way. Why, it would be easier for him, he expected, to tell what he hadn't seen, than what he had. Ah! A deal, it would.

What was the curiousest thing he had seen? Well! He didn't know. He couldn't momentarily name what was the curiousest thing he had seen—unless it was a Unicorn—and he see *him* once, at a Fair. But, supposing a young gentleman not eight year old, was to run away with a fine young woman of seven, might I think that a queer start? Certainly! Then, that was a start as he himself had had his blessed eyes on—and he had cleaned the shoes they run away in—and they was so little that he couldn't get his hand into 'em.

Master Harry Walmers's father, you see, he lived at the Elmses, down away by Shooter's Hill there, six or seven mile from Lunnun. He was a gentleman of spirit, and good looking, and held his head up when he walked, and had what you may call Fire about him. He wrote poetry, and he rode, and he ran, and he cricketed, and he danced, and he acted, and he done it all equally beautiful. He was uncommon proud of Master Harry as was his only child; but he didn't spoil him, neither. He was a gentleman that had a will of his own and a eye of his own, and that would be minded. Consequently, though he made quite a companion of the fine bright boy, and was delighted to see him so fond of reading his fairy books, and was never tired of hearing him say my name is Norval, or hearing him sing his songs about Young May Moons is beaming love, and When he as adores thee has left but the name, and that: still he kept the command over the child, and the child was a child, and it's to be wished more of 'em was!

How did Boots happen to know all this? Why, through being under-gardener. Of

course he couldn't be under-gardener, and he always about, in the summer-time, near the windows on the lawn, a mowing, and sweeping, and weeding, and pruning, and this and that, without getting acquainted with the ways of the family.—Even supposing Master Harry hadn't come to him one morning early, and said, "Cobbs, how should you spell Norah, if you was asked?" and then begun cutting it in print, all over the fence.

He couldn't say he had taken particular notice of children before that; but, really it was pretty to see them two mites a going about the place together, deep in love. And the courage of the boy! Bless your soul, he'd have thrown off his little hat, and tucked up his little sleeves, and gone in at a Lion, he would, if they had happened to meet one and she had been frightened of him. One day he stops, along with her, where Boots was hoeing weeds in the gravel, and says—speaking up, "Cobbs," he says, "I like you." "Do you, sir? I'm proud to hear it." "Yes, I do, Cobbs. Why do I like you, do you think, Cobbs?" "Don't know, Master Harry, I am sure." "Because Norah likes you, Cobbs." "Indeed, sir? That's very gratifying." "Gratifying, Cobbs? It's better than millions of the brightest diamonds, to be liked by Norah." "Certainly, sir." "You're going away, ain't you, Cobbs?" "Yes sir." "Would you like another situation, Cobbs?" "Well, sir, I shouldn't object, if it was a good 'un." "Then, Cobbs," says he, "you shall be our Head Gardener when we are married." And he tucks her, in her little sky blue mantle, under his arm, and walks away.

Boots could assure me that it was better than a picture, and equal to a play, to see them babies with their long bright curling hair, their sparkling eyes, and their beautiful light tread, a rambling about the garden, deep in love. Boots was of opinion that the birds believed they was birds, and kept up with 'em, singing to please 'em. Sometimes, they would creep under the Tulip-tree, and would sit there with their arms round one another's necks, and their soft cheeks touching, a reading about the Prince, and the Dragon, and the good and bad enchanters, and the king's fair daughter. Sometimes, he would hear them planning about having a house in a forest, keeping bees and a cow, and living entirely on milk and honey. Once, he came upon them by the pond, and heard Master Harry say, "Adorable Norah, kiss me, and say you love me to distraction, or I'll jump in head-foremost." And Boots made no question he would have done it, if she hadn't complied. On the whole, Boots said it had a tendency to make him feel as if he was in love himself—only he didn't exactly know who with.

"Cobbs," said Master Harry, one evening, when Cobbs was watering the flowers; "I am going on a visit, this present Midsommer, to my grandmammas at York."

"Are you indeed, sir? I hope you'll have a pleasant time. I am going into Yorkshire myself, when I leave here."

"Are you going to your grandmammas, Cobbs?"

"No, sir. I haven't got such a thing."

"Not as a grandmammas, Cobbs?"

"No, sir."

The boy looked on at the watering of the flowers, for a little while, and then said, "I shall be very glad indeed to go, Cobbs—Norah's going."

"You'll be all right then, sir," says Cobbs, "with your beautiful sweetheart by your side."

"Cobbs," returned the boy, flushing. "I never let anybody joke about it, when I can prevent them."

"It wasn't a joke, sir," says Cobbs with humility, "—wasn't so meant."

"I am glad of that, Cobbs, because I like you, you know, and you're going to live with us.—Cobbs!"

"Sir."

"What do you think my grandmammas gives me, when I go down there?"

"I couldn't so much as make a guess, sir."

"A Bank of England five-pound note, Cobbs."

"Whew!" says Cobbs, "that's a spanking sum of money, Master Harry."

"A person could do a good deal with such a sum of money as that. Couldn't a person, Cobbs?"

"I believe you, sir!"

"Cobbs," said the boy, "I'll tell you a secret. At Norah's house, they have been joking her about me, and pretending to laugh at our being engaged. Pretending to make game of it, Cobbs!"

"Such, sir," says Cobbs, "is the depravity of human nature."

The boy, looking exactly like his father, stood for a few minutes with his glewing face towards the sunset, and then departed with "Good-night, Cobbs. I'm going in."

If I was to ask Boots how it happened that he was a going to leave that place just at that present time, well, he couldn't rightly answer me. He did suppose he might have stayed there till now, if he had been anyways inclined. But, you see, he was younger then and he wanted change. That's what he wanted—change. Mr. Walmsley, he said, to him when he give him notice of his intentions to leave, "Cobbs," he says, "have you anythink to complain of? I make the inquiry, because if I find that any of my people really has anythink to complain of, I wish to make it right if I can." "No, sir," says Cobbs; "thanking you, sir, I find myself as well situated here as I could hope to be anywhere. The truth is, sir, that I'm a going to seek my fortune." "O, indeed, Cobbs?" he says; "I hope you may find it." And Boots could assure me—which he did, touching his hair with his boot-jack—as a

minute in the way of his present calling—that he hadn't found it yet.

Well, sir! Boots left the Elmses when his time was up, and Master Harry he went down to the old lady's at York, which old lady would have given that child the teeth out of her head (if she had had any), she was so wrapt up in him. What does that Infant do—for Infant you may call him and be within the mark—but cut away from that old lady's with his Norah, on a expedition to go to Gretna Green and be married!

Sir, Boots was at this identical Holly-Tree Inn (having left it several times since to better himself, but always come back through one thing or another), when, one summer afternoon, the coach drives up, and out of the coach gets them two children. The Guard says to our Governor, "I don't quite make out these little passengers, but the young gentleman's words was, that they was to be brought here." The young gentleman gets out; hands his lady out; gives the Guard something for himself; says to our Governor, "We're to stop here to-night, please. Sitting-room and two bed-rooms will be required. Chops and cherry-pudding for two!" and tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks into the house much bolder than Brass.

Boots leaves me to judge what the amazement of that establishment was, when those two tiny creatures all alone by themselves was marched into the Angel;—much more so, when he, who had seen them without their seeing him, give the Governor his views of the expedition they was upon. "Cobbs," says the Governor, "if this is so, I must set off myself to York and quiet their friends' minds. In which case you must keep your eye upon 'em, and humour 'em, till I come back. But, before I take these measures, Cobbs, I should wish you to find from themselves whether your opinions is correct." "Sir to you," says Cobbs, "that shall be done directly."

So, Boots goes upstairs to the Angel, and there he finds Master Harry on a enormous sofa—immense at any time, but looking like the Great Bed of Ware, compared with him—a drying the eyes of Miss Norah with his pocket-handkercher. Their little legs was entirely off the ground, of course, and it really is not possible for Boots to express to me how small them children looked.

"It's Cobbs! It's Cobbs!" cries Master Harry, and comes running to him and catching hold of his hand. Miss Norah comes running to him on t'other side and catching hold of his t'other hand, and they both jump for joy.

"I see you a getting out, sir," says Cobbs. "I thought it was you. I thought I couldn't be mistaken in your height and figure. What's the object of your journey, sir?—Matrimonial?"

"We are going to be married, Cobbs at

Gretna Green," returned the boy. "We have run away on purpose. Norah has been in rather low spirits, Cobbs; but she'll be happy, now we have found you to be our friend."

"Thank you, sir, and thank you, miss," says Cobbs, "for your good opinion. Did you bring any luggage with you, sir?"

If I will believe Boots when he gives me his word and honour upon it, the lady had got a parasol, a smelling-bottle, a round and a half of cold buttered toast, eight peppermint drops, and a hair-brush—seemingly, a doll's. The gentleman had got about half-a-dozen yards of string, a knife, three or four sheets of writing-paper folded up surprising small, a orange, and a Chaney mug with his name upon it.

"What may be the exact natur of your plans, sir?" says Cobbs.

"To go on," replied the boy—which the courage of that boy was something wonderful!—"in the morning, and be married to-morrow."

"Just so, sir," says Cobbs. "Would it meet your views, sir, if I was to accompany you?"

When Cobbs said this, they both jumped for joy again, and cried out, "O yes, yes, Cobbs! Yes!"

"Well, sir," says Cobbs. "If you will excuse my having the freedom to give an opinion, what I should recommend would be this. I'm acquainted with a pony, sir, which, put in a pleyton that I could borrow, would take you and Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior (myself driving, if you approved), to the end of your journey in a very short space of time. I am not altogether sure, sir, that this pony will be at liberty to-morrow, but even if you had to wait over to-morrow for him, it might be worth your while. As to the small account here, sir, in case you was to find yourself running at all short, that don't signify; because I'm a part proprietor of this inn, and it could stand over."

Boots assures me that when they clapped their hands, and jumped for joy again, and called him "Good Cobbs!" and "Dear Cobbs!" and bent across him to kiss one another in the delight of their confiding hearts, he felt himself the meanest rascal for deceiving 'em, that ever was born.

"Is there anything you want just at present, sir?" says Cobbs, mortally ashamed of himself.

"We should like some cakes after dinner," answered Master Harry, folding his arms, putting out one leg, and looking straight at him, "and two apples—and jam. With dinner we should like to have toast-and-water. But, Norah has always been accustomed to half a glass of currant wine at dessert. And so have I."

"It shall be ordered at the bar, sir," says Cobbs; and away he went.

Boots has the feeling as fresh upon him at

this minute of speaking, as he had then, that he would far rather have had it out in half-a-dozen rounds with the Governor, than have combined with him; and that he wished with all his heart there was any impossible place where those two babies could make an impossible marriage, and live impossibly happy ever afterwards. However, as it couldn't be, he went into the Governor's plans, and the Governor set off for York in half-an-hour.

The way in which the women of that house—without exception—every one of 'em—married and single—took to that boy, when they heard the story, Boots considers surprising. It was as much as he could do to keep 'em from dashing into the room and kissing him. They climbed up all sorts of places, at the risk of their lives, to look at him through a pane of glass. They was seven deep at the key-hole. They was out of their minds about him and his bold spirit.

In the evening, Boots went into the room, to see how the runaway couple was getting on. The gentleman was on the window-seat, supporting the lady in his arms. She had tears upon her face, and was lying, very tired and half asleep, with her head upon his shoulder.

"Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior, fatigued, sir?" says Cobbs.

"Yes, she is tired, Cobbs; but, she is not used to be away from home, and she has been in low spirits again. Cobbs, do you think you could bring a biffin, please?"

"I ask your pardon, sir," says Cobbs. "What was it you?"

"I think a Norfolk biffin would rouse her, Cobbs. She is very fond of them."

Boots withdrew in search of the required restorative, and, when he brought it in, the gentleman handed it to the lady, and fed her with a spoon, and took a little himself. The lady being heavy with sleep, and rather cross, "What should you think, sir," says Cobbs, "of a chamber candlestick?" The gentleman approved; the chambermaid went first, up the great staircase; the lady, in her sky-blue mantle, followed, gallantly escorted by the gentleman; the gentleman embraced her at her door, and retired to his own apartment, where Boots softly locked him up.

Boots couldn't but feel with increased acuteness what a base deceiver he was, when they consulted him at breakfast (they had ordered sweet milk-and-water, and toast and currant jelly, overnight), about the pony. It really was as much as he could do, he don't mind confessing to me, to look them two young things in the face, and think what a wicked old father of lies he had grown up to be. Howsoever, he went on a lying like a Trojan, about the pony. He told 'em that it did so unfortunately happen that the pony was half clipped, you see, and that he couldn't be taken out in that state, for fear it should strike to his inside. But, that he'd be finished clipping in the course of the day,

and that to-morrow morning at eight o'clock the pheasant would be ready. Boots's view of the whole case, looking back upon it in my room, is, that Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior was beginning to give in. She hadn't had her hair curled when she went to bed, and she didn't seem quite up to brushing it herself, and it's getting in her eyes put her out. But, nothing put out Master Harry. He sat behind his breakfast-cup, a tearing away at the jelly, as if he had been his own father.

After breakfast, Boots is inclined to consider that they drew soldiers—at least, he knows that many such was found in the fireplace, all on horseback. In the course of the morning, Master Harry rang the bell—it was surprising how that there boy did carry on—and said in a sprightly way, "Cobbs, is there any good walks in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, sir," says Cobbs. "There's Love Lane."

"Get out with you, Cobbs!"—that was that there boy's expression—"you're joking."

"Begging your pardon, sir," says Cobbs, "there really is Love Lane. And a pleasant walk it is, and proud shall I be to show it to yourself and Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior."

"Norah, dear," said Master Harry, "this is curious. We really ought to see Love Lane. Put on your bonnet, my sweetest darling, and we will go there with Cobbs."

Boots leaves me to judge what a Beast he felt himself to be, when that young pair told him, as they all three jogged along together, that they had made up their minds to give him two thousand guineas a year as head gardener, on accounts of his being so true a friend to 'em. Boots could have wished at the moment that the earth would have opened and swallowed him; up; he felt so mean, with their beaming eyes a-looking at him, and believing him. Well, sir, he turned the conversation as well as he could, and he took 'em down Love Lane to the water-meadows, and there Master Harry would have drowned himself in half a moment more, a-getting out a water-lily for her—but nothing daunted that boy. Well, sir, they was tired out. All being so new and strange to 'em, they was tired as tired could be. And they laid down on a bank of daisies, like the children in the wood, leastways meadows, and fell asleep.

Boots don't know—perhaps I do—but never mind, it don't signify either way—why it made a max fit to make a fool of himself, to see them two pretty babies a lying there in the clear still sunny day, not dreaming half so hard when they was asleep, as they done when they was awake. But, Lord! when you come to think of yourself, you know, and what a game you have been up to ever since you was in your own cradle, and what a poor sort of a chap you are, and how it's always either Yesterday with you, or else To-morrow, and never To-day, that's where it is."

Well, sir, they woke up at last, and then

one thing was getting pretty clear to Boots : namely, that Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior's temper was on the move. When Master Harry took her round the waist, she said he "teased her so;" and when he says, "Norah, my young May Moon, your Harry teases you!" she tells him, "Yes; and I want to go home!"

A biled fowl, and baked bread-and-butter pudding, brought Mrs. Walmers up a little; but Boots could have wished, he must privately own to me, to have seen her more sensible of the voice of love, and less abandoning of herself to currants. However, Master Harry he kept up, and his noble heart was as fond as ever. Mrs. Walmers turned very sleepy about dusk, and began to cry. Therefore, Mrs. Walmers went off to bed as per yesterday; and Master Harry ditto repeated.

About eleven or twelve at night, comes back the Governor in a chaise, along with Mr. Walmers and an elderly lady. Mr. Walmers looks amused and very serious, both at once, and says to our missis, "We are much indebted to you, ma'am, for your kind care of our little children, which we can never sufficiently acknowledge. Pray ma'am, where is my boy?" Our missis says, "Cobbs has the dear child in charge, sir. Cobbs, show Forty!" Then, he says to Cobbs, "Ah Cobbs! I am glad to see you. I understood you was here!" And Cobbs says, "Yes, sir. Your most obedient, sir."

I may be surprised to hear Boots say it, perhaps; but, Boots assures me that his heart beat like a hammer, going up stairs. "I beg your pardon, sir," says he, while unlocking the door; "I hope you are not angry with Master Harry. For, Master Harry is a fine boy, sir, and will do you credit and honour." And Boots signifies to me, that if the fine boy's father had contradicted him in the daring state of mind in which he then was, he thinks he should have "fetched him a crack," and taken the consequences.

But, Mr. Walmers only says, "No, Cobbs. No, my good fellow. Thank you!" And, the door being opened, goes in.

Boots goes in too, holding the light, and he sees Mr. Walmers go up to the bedside, bend gently down, and kiss the little sleeping face. Then, he stands looking at it for a minute, looking wonderfully like it (they do say he ran away with Mrs. Walmers); and then he gently shakes the little shoulder.

"Harry, my dear boy! Harry!"

Master Harry starts up and looks at him. Looks at Cobbs too. Such is the honour of that mite, that he looks at Cobbs, to see whether he has brought him into trouble.

"I am not angry, my child. I only want you to dress yourself and come home."

"Yes, Pa."

Master Harry dresses himself quickly. His breast begins to swell when he has nearly finished, and it swells more and more

as he stands at last, a-looking at his father: his father standing a-looking at him, the quiet image of him.

"Please may I"—the spirit of that little creatur, and the way he kept his rising tears down!—"Please dear Pa—may I—kiss Norah, before I go?"

"You may, my child."

So, he takes Master Harry in his hand, and Boots leads the way with the candle, and they come to that other bedroom: where the elderly lady is seated by the bed, and poor little Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior is fast asleep. There, the father lifts the child up to the pillow, and he lays his little face down for an instant by the little warm face of poor unconscious little Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior, and gently draws it to him—a sight so touching to the chambermaids who are peeping through the door, that one of them calls out "It's a shame to part 'em!" But this chambermaid was always, as Boots informs me, a soft-hearted one. Not that there was any harm in that girl. Far from it.

Finally, Boots says, that's all about it. Mr. Walmers drove away in the chaise, having hold of Master Harry's hand. The elderly lady and Mrs. Harry Walmers Junior that was never to be, (she married a Captain, long afterwards, and died in India), went off next day. In conclusion, Boots puts it to me whether I hold with him in two opinions; firstly, that there are not many couples on their way to be married, who are half as innocent of guile as those two children; secondly, that it would be a jolly good thing for a great many couples on their way to be married, if they could only be stopped in time and brought back separately.

THE LANDLORD.

URIAH TATTENHALL is my elder brother by fifteen years. I am Sam Tattenhall.

My brother Uriah rang at his gate at his snug retreat of Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, near London, exactly at a quarter to six—his regular hour—when the omnibus from the city set him down at the end of the lane. It was December, but the weather was fine and frosty, and as it was within a few days of Christmas, his children—four in number—two boys, just come home from school, and two girls who came home from school every day—were all on the alert to receive him, with a world of schemes for the delectation of the coming holiday-time.

My brother Uriah was an especial family-man. He made himself the companion and play-fellow of his children on all occasions that his devotion to his business in the city would admit of. His hearty, cheery voice was heard as he entered the hall, and while he was busy pulling-off his over-coat, and hanging up his hat: "Well, my boys, well George, well Miss Lucy, there. What are you all about?"

How's the world need you since this morning? Where's mamma! The kettle boiling, oh!" The running fire of hilarity that always animated him seemed to throw sunshine and a new life into the house, when he came in. The children this evening rushed out into the hall, and crowded round him with such a number of "I say, pa's," and "Do you know, pa?" and "Don't tell him now, Mary,—let him guess. Oh! you'll never guess, pa!" that he could only hurry them all into the sitting-room before him like a little flock of sheep, saying, "Well, well, you rogues,—well, well,—let us have some tea, and then all about it."

The fire blazed bonnily, as it was wont, in the bright grate, and that and the candles made the room, with light and warmth, the very paradise of comfort. Mrs. Tattenhall, a handsome woman of five and thirty or so—she might be more, but she did not look it—was just in the act of pouring the water from a very bright little kettle into the equally bright silver tea-pot, and with a sunny, rosy, youthful, and yet matronly face, turned smilingly at his entrance, and said, "Well, my dear, is it not a very cold night?"

"Not in this room, certainly, my dear," said my brother Uriah, "and with such a snuggerly before one, who cares for cold outside."

Mrs. Tattenhall gave him a brighter smile still, and the neat Harriet coming in with the toast, the whole family group was speedily seated round the tea-table, and the whole flood of anticipated pleasures and plans of the younger population let loose, and cordially entered into, and widened and improved by my brother Uriah. He promised them an early night at the very best pantomime, and they were to read all about all the pantomimes in the newspapers, and find out which was the best. He meant to take them to see all sorts of sights, and right off-hand on Christmas Eve he was going to set up a Christmas-tree, and have Christkindchen, and all sorts of gifts under it for everybody. He had got it all ready done by a German who came often to his warehouse, and it was somewhere, not far off just now.

"Thank you, papa,—thank you a thousand times. Oh! what heaps of fun!" exclaimed the children, altogether.

"Why, really, my dear," said Mrs. Tattenhall, delighted as the children, "what has come to you? You quite out-do yourself, good as you always are. You are quite magnificent in your projects."

"To be sure," said Uriah, taking hold of the hands of little Lucy, and dancing round the room with her. "To be sure; we may just as well be merry as sad; it will be all the same a hundred years hence."

Presently the tea-table was cleared, and, as they drew round the fire, my brother Uriah pulled out a book, and said, "George, there's a

nice book—begin, and read it aloud: it will be a very pleasant book for these winter evenings before all the dissipation begins. It is Fringle's Adventures in South Africa, and is almost as good as Robinson Crusoe. I knew Fringle well; a lame, little man, that you never would dream could sit on a horse, much less ride after lions and elephants in that style."

"Lions and elephants!" all were silent, and George read on. He read till eight o'clock, their bed-time, and the whole group—parents and children—were equally delighted with it. As they closed the book—"Now," said the father, "would it not be grand fun to live out there, and ride after the lions and elephants?"

"Ah! grand fun!" said the boys, but the mother and the girls shuddered at the lions. "Well, you could stay in the house, you know," said Bob.

"Right, my fine fellow," said the father, clapping him on the shoulder. "So now off to bed, and dream all about it."

When the children were gone, my brother Uriah stretched out his feet on the fender and fell into a silence. When my brother's silence had lasted some time his wife said, "Are you sleepy, my dear?"

"No; never was more wakeful," said Uriah; "really, my dear, I never was less inclined to be sprightly: but it won't do to dash the spirits of the children. Let them enjoy the Christmas as much as they can, they will never be young but once."

"What is amiss?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall, with a quick apprehensive look. "Is there something amiss? Good gracious! you frighten me."

"Why no, there is nothing exactly amiss: there is nothing new; but the fact is, I have just taken stock, and to-day finished casting all up, and struck the balance."

"And is it bad? Is it less than you expected?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall, fixing her eyes seriously on her husband's face.

"Bad? No, not bad, nor good. I'll tell you what it is. You've heard of a toad in a mad wall. Well, that's me. Twenty years ago, I went into business with exactly three thousand pounds, and, here I have been trading, and fagging, and caring, and getting and losing, business extending, and profits getting less and less, making large sales, and men breaking directly after, and so the upshot is,—twenty years trade, and the balance the same to a pound as that I began with. Three thousand I started with, and three thousand is precisely my capital at this moment."

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Tattenhall, wonderfully relieved. "Be thankful, my dear Uriah, that you have three thousand pounds. You have your health wonderfully, we have all our health; we have children, as good and promising children, as anybody is, blessed with, and a happy home, and live as well and

comfortably as any one need to do, or as I wish, I am sure. What do we want more?"

"What do we want more?" said Uriah, drawing up his legs suddenly, and clapping his hands in a positive sort of a way on his knees. "Why, I for one, want a great deal more. We've children, you say, and a home, and all that. Heaven be thanked, so we have! but I want our children to have a home after us. Three thousand pounds divided amongst four, leaves about seven hundred and fifty each. Is it worth while to fag a whole life, and leave them that and a like prospect? No," continued Uriah, in a considering manner, and shaking his head. "No, I want something more; more for myself; more for them; more room, more scope, a wider horizon, and a more proportionate result of a whole human existence. And do you know Maria what I have come to as the best conclusion? To go out to Australia."

"To go out to Australia!" said Mrs. Tattenhall, in astonishment. "My dear Uriah, you are joking. You mean no such thing."

"But that is just what I do mean," said Uriah, taking his wife's hand affectionately; "I have thought of it long, and the toad-in-the-wall balance has determined me. And now what I ask of you is to look at it calmly and earnestly. You know the Smiths, the Browns, and the Robinsons have gone out. They report the climate delicious, and that wonders are doing. A new country, if it be a good country, is the place to grow and thrive in, without doubt. Look at the trees in a wood. They grow up and look very fine in the mass. The wood, you say, is a very fine wood; but when you have looked at the individual trees, they are crowded and spindled up. They cannot put out a single bough beyond a certain distance; if they attempt it, their presuming twigs are poked back again by sturdy neighbours all round, that are all struggling for light and space like them. Look then at the tree on the open plain,—how it spreads and hangs in grand amplitude its unobstructed boughs and foliage: a lordly object. Just so, this London. It is a vast, a glorious, a most imposing London, but thousands of its individuals in it are pressed and circumscribed to a few square yards and no more. Give me the open plain,—the new country, and then see if I do not put out a better head, and our children too."

Mrs. Tattenhall, now she felt that her husband was in earnest, sat motionless and confounded. The shock had come too suddenly upon her. Her husband, it is true, had often told her that things did not move as he wished; that they seemed fixed, and stereotyped, and stagnant; but then, when the merchants satisfied? (She never had entertained an idea but that they should go on to the end of the chapter as they had been going on ever since she was married. She

was bound up heart and soul with her own country; she had her many friends and relations, with whom she lived on the most cordial terms; all her tastes, feelings, and ideas were English and metropolitan. At the very idea of quitting England, and for so new, and so distant a country, she was seized with an indescribable consternation.

"My dear Maria!" said her husband; "mind, I don't ask you to go at first. You and the children can remain here till I have been and seen what the place and prospects are like. My brother Sam will look after business—he will soon be at home in it—and if all is pleasant, why, you will come then, if not I won't ask you. I'll work out a good round sum myself if possible, or open up some connection that will mend matters here. What can I say more?"

"Nothing, dear Uriah, nothing. But those poor children —"

"Those poor children!" said Uriah. "Why my dear Maria, if you were to ask them whether they would like a voyage to Australia, to go and see those ever-green woods, and gallop about all amongst gay parrots, and great kangaroos, they would jump off their seats with joy. The spirits of the young are ever on the wing for adventure and new countries. It is the prompting of that Great Power which has constructed all this marvellous universe, and bade mankind multiply and replenish the earth. Don't trouble yourself about them. You saw how they devoured the adventures at the Cape, and you'll see how they will kindle up in a wonderful enthusiasm at the promise of a voyage to Australia. What are pantomimes to that?"

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Tattenhall. "They know nothing about the reality; all is fairyland and poetry to them."

"The reality! the reality, Maria, will be all fairyland and poetry to them."

Mrs. Tattenhall shook her head, and retired that night—not to sleep, but with a very sad heart to ruminate over this unexpected revelation. My brother's words were realised at the first mention of the project to the children. After the first shock of surprise and doubt whether it were really meant, they became unboundedly delighted. The end of it was, that by the middle of February, my brother Uriah, having had a handsome offer for his business and stock, had wound up all his affairs; and Mrs. Tattenhall having concluded, like a good wife and mother, to go with the whole family, they bade farewell to England, Mrs. Tattenhall with many tears, Uriah serious and thoughtful, the children full of delight and wonder at everything in the ship.

They had a fine voyage, though with very few passengers, for the captain said there was a temporary damp on the Australian colonies. The order of the Government at home to raise the upset price of land to one

pound per acre, had checked emigration, and as there had been a good deal of speculation in Melbourne in town allotments, things just now looked gloomy. This was in eighteen hundred and forty-three. "But it can't last long," said the Captain, "that silly order of raising the price of the land is so palpably absurd; while America is selling land so much nearer at a quarter of the price, that it must be repealed; and then all will be right again."

It was the middle of May when our party arrived in Hobson's Bay. It was very rainy, gloomy weather—the very opposite to all that the climate had been represented in the accounts sent home—but then it was the commencement of winter, the November of our season. Uriah got a boat, and sailed up the winding river to the town. The sail was through a flat tract of land densely overgrown with a mass of close, dark bushes, of some ten feet high, somewhat resembling our aloe-tree, the tea-tree of that country. On reaching the foot of the town, which stood on a range of low hills, Uriah and his companions stepped out into a most appalling slough of black mud, through which they waded till they reached the town, which was of no great extent, scattered over a considerable space, however, for the number of houses, and with great intervals of woodland, and of places where the trees had been felled, and where the stumps, a yard high, remained in unsightly nakedness.

Uriah walked on through a scene which, somehow in keeping with the weather, fell heavily on his spirits. There was nothing doing, or stirring; houses in various degrees of progress stood as they were. There were piles of timber, lime, shingles, posts, and rails, empty wagons and carts, but no people employed about them. On every hand he saw lots marked out for fencing or building upon, but there they remained all stationary.

"Is it Sunday?" Uriah asked himself. No, it was Tuesday. Then why all this stagnation; this solitude? In a lane, or rather deep track of mud and ruts, since known as Flinders' Lane, but then without a name, and only just wide enough between the trees for a cart to pass, Uriah wading and plunging along, the rain meantime pouring, streaming, and drumming down on his umbrella, he came face to face with a large active man in a mackintosh cloak, and an oilskin hood over his head. Neither of them found it very convenient to step out of the middle mud track, because on each side of it rose a perfect bank of sludge raised by the wheels of drays, and stopping to have a look at each other, the strange man suddenly put out a huge red hand warm and wet, and exclaimed:

"What! Tattenhall! You here! In the name of all wonders what could bring you here at this moment?"

"What, Robinson! is that you?" cried Uriah. "Is this your climate? This your paradise?"

"Climate—paradise—be hanged!" said Robinson. "They're well enough. If everything else were as well there would be nought to complain of. But tell me Uriah Tattenhall, with that comfortable Trumpington Cottage at Peckham, with that well-to-do warehouse in the Old Jewry, what could possess you to come here?"

"What should I come for, but to settle!" asked Uriah, somewhat chagrined at this salutation.

"To settle! ha, ha!" burst out Robinson. "Well, as for that, you could not come to a better place. It is a regular settler here. Everything and everybody are settled here out and out. This is a settlement, and no mistake; but it is like a many other settlements, the figures are all on the wrong side the ledger."

"Good gracious!" said Uriah.

"Nay, it is neither good nor gracious," replied Robinson. "Look round. What do you see? Ruin, desertion, dirt and the—devil!"

"Why, how is that?" asked Uriah. "I thought you, and Jones, and Brown, and all of you had made your fortunes."

"So we had, or were just on the point of doing. We had purchased lots of land for building, and had sold it out again at five hundred per cent, when chop! down comes little Lord John with his pound an acre, and heigh, presto! everything goes topsyturvy. Our purchasers are either in the bankruptcy court, or have vanished. By jingo! I could show you such lots, fine lots for houses and gardens, for shops and warehouses; ay, and shops and warehouses upon them too, as would astonish you."

"Well, and what then?" asked Uriah.

"What then! why man don't you comprehend. Emigration is stopped, broken off as short as a pipe-shank, not a soul is coming out to buy and live in all these houses—not a soul except an odd—excuse me, Tattenhall, I was going to say, except you and another fool or two. But where do you live out! Look! there is my house," pointing to a wooden erection near. "I'll come and see you as soon as I know where you fix yourself."

"But mind one thing," cried Uriah, seizing him by the arm as he passed. "For heaven's sake, don't talk in this manner to my wife. It would kill her."

"Oh no, mum's the word! There's no use frightening the women," said Robinson. "No, confound it, I won't croak any how. And, after all, bad as things are, why, they can't remain so for ever. Nothing ever does, that's one comfort. They'll mend sometime."

"When?" said Uriah.

"Well," said Robinson, pausing a little, "not before you and I meet again, so I may

leave that answer to another opportunity ; " and with a nod and very knowing look he stalked on.

"Odd fellow ! " said my brother Uriah. " He is very loose for a ruined man. What is one to think of ? " and he waded on. After making a considerable circuit, and actually losing himself in the wood somewhere about where the Reverend Mr. Morrison's chapel now stands in Collins' Street, he again came across Robinson who stood at the door of a considerable erection of wattle-and-dab, that is, a building of boughs wattled on stakes, and dabbled over with mud ; then not uncommon in Melbourne, and still common enough in the bush. It stood on the hill-side with a swift muddy torrent produced by the rains rushing down the valley below it, towards the river, as it has often done since it bore the name of Swanston Street.

"Here, Tattenhall ! here is a pretty go ! " shouted Robinson ; " a fellow has cut with bag and baggage to-night who owes me four thousand pounds, and has left me a lot more houses and land. That's the way every day. But look, here is a house ready for you. You can't have a better, and you can pay me any trifle you like, something is better than nothing."

He led Uriah in. The house was thoroughly and comfortably furnished ; though, of course, very simply, with beds and everything. Uriah in less than a week, was safely established there, and had time to ramble about with his boys, and learn more fully the condition of the colony. It was melancholy beyond description. Wild, reckless speculation brought to a sudden close by the cessation of immigration, had gone like a hurricane over the place, and had left nothing but ruin and paralysis behind it. No words that Robinson had used, or that any man could use, could overpaint the real condition of prostration and of misery. Two hundred and eighty insolvencies in a population of ten thousand, told the tale of awful reality. Uriah was overwhelmed with consternation at the step he had taken. O ! how pleasant seemed that Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, and that comfortable warehouse in the Old Jewry, as he grieved them from the Antipodes in the midst of rain and ruin.

What, however, was my brother Uriah's astonishment to see Robinson stalk in the next day, his tall figure having to stoop at every door, and in his brusque, noisy way, go up to Mrs. Tattenhall, and shaking her hand as you would shake the handle of a pump, congratulate her on her arrival in the colony.

"A lucky hit, madam, a most lucky, scientific hit ! Ah ! trust Tattenhall for knowing what he is about."

Mrs. Tattenhall stood with a singular expression of wonder and bewilderment on her countenance, for the condition of the place, and the condolings of several female neighbours who had dropped in in Uriah's absence,

had induced her to believe that they had made a fatal move of it.

"Why, sir," said she, "what can you mean, for as I hear, the place is utterly ruined, and certainly it looks like it ?"

"Ruined ! to be sure it is, at least the people are, more's the pity for me, and the like of me who have lost everything ; but for Tattenhall who has everything to gain, and money to win it with, why it is the golden opportunity, the very thing ! If he had watched at all the four corners of the world, and for a hundred years, he could not have dropped into such a chance. Ah ! trust Tattenhall, make me believe he did not plan it." Thrusting his knuckles into Uriah's side, and laughing with a thunder-clap of a laugh that seemed to come from lungs of leather.

"Why, look here now," he continued, drawing a chair and seating himself on its front edge ; "look here now, if you had come six months ago, you could have bought nothing except out of the fire. Town allotments, land, houses, bread, meat, sugar, everything ten times the natural price : and, now ! cheap, dog cheap ! of no value at all, you might have them for asking for ; nay, I could go into a dozen deserted shops, and take any quantity for nothing. And property ! why three thousand pounds cash would almost buy all the place—all the colony."

"What is the use," asked Mrs. Tattenhall, "of buying a ruined colony ?"

"A ruined colony ! " said Robinson, edging himself still more forward in his chair, and seeming actually to sit upon nothing, his huge figure and large ruddy face appearing still larger. "The colony, madam, is not ruined ; never was ruined, never can be ruined. The people are ruined, a good lot of them ; but the colony is a good and a grand colony. God made the colony, and let me tell you, madam," looking very serious, "Providence is no speculator, up to-day, down to-morrow. What he does he does. Well, the people have ruined themselves ; but it is out of their power to ruin the colony ; no, nor the town. The town and the colony are sound as a bell, never were sounder, never had more stuff in them ; never had so much. There is the land still, not a yard of it is gone ; no great fellow has put that on his back and gone off with it. The land is there, and the houses, and the merchandise, and the flocks, and herds, and horses : and—what concerns you—"

He sat and looked at Mrs. Tattenhall, who stood there intently listening, and Uriah stood just behind her listening too, and all the children with their mouths open, gazing on the strange man.

"Well, what—what concerns us ? " said Mrs. Tattenhall.

"To get a huge, almighty heap of something for nothing," said the large man.

stretching out his arms in a circular shape, as if he would enclose a whole globe, and in a low, slow, deep tone, calculated to sink deep into the imaginations of the listeners.

"If we did but know when things would mend," said my brother Uriah, for the first time venturing to put in a word.

"When!" said Robinson starting up so suddenly that his head struck against a beam in the low one-storeyed house. "Confound these low places," said he, turning fiery red, and rubbing his crown, "there will be better anon. When? say ye? Hark ye! this colony is—how old? Eight years! and in eight years what a town! what wealth! what buildings! what a power of sheep and cattle! The place is knocked down, won't it get up again? Ay, and quickly! Here are a pair of sturdy legs," he said, turning to Bob, who flushed up in surprise; "but, Mrs. Tattenhall, you did not teach him to walk without a few tumbles, eh? But he got up again, and how he stands now! what a sturdy young rogue it is! And what made him get up again? Because he was young and strong, and the colony is young and strong, madam. Eight years old! What shall I give you for a three thousand pounds purchase made now, three years hence? Just think of that," said the tall man, "just turn that over a time or two," nodding solemnly to my brother, and then to my sister-in-law, and then cautiously glancing at the menacing beam, and with a low duck diving out of the house.

"What a strange fellow!" said Uriah.

"But how true!" said Mrs. Tattenhall.

"How true!—What true?" asked Uriah, astonished.

"Why," said Mrs. Tattenhall, "what he says. It is truth, Uriah; we must buy as much as we can."

"But," said Uriah, "only the other day he said the clean contrary. He said everybody was ruined."

"And he says so still," added Mrs. Tattenhall, enthusiastically, "but not the colony. We must buy! We must buy, and wait. One day we shall reap a grand harvest."

"Ah!" said Uriah; "so you let yourself, my dear Maria, be thus easily persuaded, because Robinson wants to sell, and thinks we have money?"

"Is it not common sense, however? Is it not the plainest sense?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall. "Do you think this colony is never to recover?"

"Never is a long while," said Uriah. "But still—"

"Well, we will think it over, and see how the town lies; and where the chief points of it will be, probably, hereafter; and if this Mr. Robinson has any land in such places, I would buy of him, because he has given us the first idea of it."

They thought and looked, and the end of it was, that very soon they had bought up land

and houses, chiefly from Robinson, to the amount of two thousand pounds. Robinson said would not have sold, but have mortgaged; and that fact was the most convincing proof that he was sincere in his expectations of a revival. Time went on. Things were more and more hopeless. Uriah, who had nothing else to do, set on and cultivated a garden. He had plenty of garden ground, and his boys helped him, and enjoyed it vastly. As the summer went on, and melons grew ripe, and there were plenty of green peas and vegetables, by the addition of meat, which was now only one penny a-pound, they could live almost for nothing; and Uriah thought they could wait and maintain themselves for years, if necessary. So, from time to time, one tale of urgent staring distress or another lured him on to take fresh bargains, till he saw himself almost penniless. Things still remained as dead as the very stones or the stumps around them. My brother Uriah began to feel very melancholy; and Mrs. Tattenhall, who had so strongly advised the wholesale purchase of property, looked very serious. Uriah often thought: "Ah! she would do it; but—Bless her! I will never say so, for she did it for the best." But his boys and girls were growing apace, and made him think, "Bless me! In a few years they will be shooting up into men and women; and if this speculation should turn out all moonshine!—if the place should never revive!"

He sat one day on the stump of a tree on a high ground, looking over the bay. His mind was in the most gloomy, dejected condition. Everything looked dark and hopeless. No evidence of returning life around; no spring in the commercial world; and his good money gone; as he sat thus, his eyes fixed on the distance, his mind sunk in the lowering present, a man came up, and asked him to take his land off his hands: to take it, for Heaven's sake, and save his starving family.

"Man!" said Uriah, with a face and a voice so savage that it made the suppliant start even in his misery, "I have no money! I want no land! I have too much land. You shall have it all for as much as will carry me back to England, and set me down a beggar there!"

The man shook his head. "If I had a single crown I would not ask you; but my wife is down of the fever, and my children are dying of dysentery. What shall I do! and my lots are the very best in the place."

"I tell you!" said my brother Uriah, with a fierce growl, and an angry flash of the eye, "I have no money, and how can I buy?"

He glanced at the man in fury; but a face so full of patient suffering and of sickness—sickness of the heart, of the soul, and, as it were, of famine, met his gaze, that he stopped short, felt a pang of remorse for his anger, and, pointing to a number of bullocks grazing in the valley below, he said, in a softened tone, "Look there! The other day a man

told me such a tale of horror—a sick family, and a gaol staring him in the face, that I gave him my last money—my carefully hoarded money, and of what use are those cattle to me? None whatever: You may have them for your land, if you like. I have nothing else."

"I will have them," said the man. "On a distant station I know where I could sell them, if I could only leave my family. But they have no flour, no tea, nothing but meat, meat, meat."

"Leave them to me," said Uriah, feeling the warm blood and the spirit of humanity beginning to circulate in his bosom at the sense of what was really suffering around him. "Leave them to me. I will care for them. Your wife and children shall have a doctor. I will find you some provisions for your journey, and if ever your land is worth anything, you shall have it again. This state of things makes monsters of us. It turns our blood into gall, our hearts into stones. We must resist it or we are ruined, indeed!"

"Nay," said the man, "I won't impose upon you. Take that piece of land in the valley there; it will one day be valuable."

"That!" said Uriah, looking. "That! Why, that is a swamp! I will take that—I shall not hurt you there!" And he laughed outright, the first time for two years.

Years went on, and my brother Uriah lived on, but as it were in the valley of the shadow of death. It was a melancholy and dispiriting time. The buoyancy of his soul was gone. That jovial, sunny, ebullient spirit with which he used to come home from the city, in England, had fled, as a thing that had never been. He maintained himself chiefly out of his garden. His children were springing up into long, lanky lads and lasses. He educated them himself, as well as he could; and as for clothes! Not a navy—not a beggar—in the streets of London, but could have stood a comparison with them, to their infinite disparagement. Ah! those good three thousand pounds! How will the balance stand in my brother Uriah's books at the end of the next twenty years?

But anon there awoke a slight motion in the atmosphere of life. It was a mere flutter of the air, that died out again. Then again it revived—it strengthened—it blew like a breath of life over the whole landscape. Uriah looked around him from the very place where he had sat on the stump in despair. It was bright and sunny. He heard a sound of an axe and a hammer. He looked, and saw a house, that had stood a mere skeleton, once more in progress. There were people passing to and fro with a more active air. What is that? A cart of goods? A dray of building materials. There was life and motion again! The discovery of converting sheep and oxen into tallow had raised the value of stock. The shops and the merchants

were once more in action. The man to whom he had sold the oxen came up smiling—

"Things mend, sir. We shall soon be all right. And that piece of land in the swamp, that you were so merry over, will you sell it? It lies near the wharves, and is wanted for warehouses."

"Bravo!" cried Uriah, and they descended the hill together. Part of the land was sold; and soon substantial warehouses, of the native trapstone, were rising upon it. Uriah's old attachment to a merchant's life came over him. With the purchase-money he built a warehouse too. Labour was extremely low, and he built a large and commodious one.

Another year or two, and behold Uriah busy in his warehouse; his two boys clerking it gravely in the counting-house. Things grew rapidly better. Uriah and his family were once more handsomely clad, handsomely housed, and Uriah's jolly humour was again in the ascendant. Every now and then Robinson came hurrying in, a very busy man indeed he was now, in the town council, and moreover, mayor; and saying, "Well, Mrs. Tattenhall, didn't I say it, eh? Is not this boy of a colony on a fine sturdy pair of legs again? Not down? Not dead? Well, well, Tattenhall did me a kindness, then—by ready cash for my land—I don't forget it; but I don't know how I am to make him amends, unless I come and dine with him some day." And he was off again.

Another year or two, and that wonderful crisis, the gold discovery, came. Then, what a sensation—what a stir—what a revolution! what running, and buying and bidding for land, for prime business situations!—what rolling in of people—capital—goods. Heaven and earth!—what a scene—what a place—what a people.

Ten years to a day from the last balance at the Old Jewry, Uriah Tattenhall balanced again, and his three thousand pounds was grown to seventy thousand pounds, and was still rolling up and on like a snow-ball.

There were George and Bob grown into really tall and handsome fellows. George was the able merchant, Bob had got a station out at the Dundenong-hills, and told wonderful stories of riding after kangaroos, and wild bulls, and shooting splendid lyre-birds—all of which came of reading Pringle's Life in South Africa. There were Mary and Lucy, two handsome girls as any in the colony, and wonderfully attractive to a young Benson and a younger Robinson. Wonders were the next year to bring forth, and amongst them was to be a grand picnic at Bob's station, at the Dundenong, in which they were to live out in real tents in the forest, and cook, and bake, and brew, and the ladies were to join in a bull-hunt, and shoot with revolvers, and nobody was to be hurt, or thrown, or anything to happen, but all sorts of merriment and wild-wood life.

And really my brother's villa on the Yarra River is a very fine place. The house is an Italian villa built of real stone, ample, with large, airy rooms, a broad verandah, and all in the purest taste. It stands on a high bank above the valley, in which the Yarra winds, taking a sweep there, its course marked by a dense body of acacia trees. In the spring, these trees are of resplendent gold, loading the air with their perfume. Now they were thick and dark in their foliage, casting their shade on the river deep between its banks. From the house the view presented this deep valley with this curving track of trees, and beyond slopes divided into little farms, with their little homesteads upon them, where Uriah had a number of tenants making their fortunes on some thirty or forty acres each, by hay at forty pounds a ton, and potatoes and onions at one shilling a pound and all other produce in proportion.

On this side of the river you saw extensive gardens in the hollow blooming with roses and many tropical flowers, and along the hill sides on either hand vineyards and fruit orchards of the most vigorous vegetation, and loaded with young fruit. The party assembled at my brother Uriah's house on that hospitable Christmas day, descended amid a native shrubbery, and Uriah thrust a walking-stick to its very handle into the rich black soil, and when his friends expressed their surprise, he told them that the soil there was fourteen feet deep, and would grow any quantity of produce for ages without manuring. Indeed, they passed through green corn of the most luxuriant character, and, crossing the bridge of a brook which there fell into the river, they found themselves under the acacias; by the river side there lay huge prostrate trunks of ancient gum-trees, the patriarchs of the forest, which had fallen and given place to the acacia, and now reminded the spectators that they were still in the land of primitive woods.

"Why, Tattenhall," said Robinson, to my brother Uriah, "Trumpington Cottage, my dear fellow, would cut a poor figure after this. I'd ask any lord or gentleman to show me a fatter or more desirable place in the tight little island. Bigger houses there may be, and are, but not to my mind more desirable. Do you know, very large houses always seem to me a sort of asylums for supernumerary servants—the master can only occupy a corner there—he cuts out quite small in the bulk. And as to fertility, this beats Battersea Fields and Fulham hollow. Those market-gardeners might plant and plant to all eternity, always taking out and never putting in, and if they could grow peaches, apricots, grapes, figs twice a year, and all that as fine in the open air as they do in hot-houses, and sell their bunches of parsley at sixpence a-piece, and water-melons—gathered from any gravel heap or dry open field—at five shillings a-piece,

plentiful as pumpkins, wouldn't they astonish themselves!

"But what makes you call this place Bowstead?" continued Robinson, breaking off a small wattle-bough to whisk the flies from his face. "Orr has named his Abbotsford—that's because he's a Scotchman; and we've got Cremorne Gardens, and Richmond, and Hawthorne, and all sorts of English names about here;—but Bowstead! I can't make it out."

"You can't!" said Uriah, smiling; "don't you see that the river curves in a bow here, and stead is a place?"

"O! that's it," said Robinson; "I fancied it was to remind you of Bow Bella."

"There you have it," said Bob, laughing. "Bow Bella! but, as there was a bow and no bells, my father put a stead to it, that's instead of the bells, you know."

"Bless me!" said Robinson: "now I should never have thought of that—how very clever!"

And he took the joke in such perfect simplicity, that all burst into a simultaneous laugh; for every one else knew that it was so called in honour of Maria Bowstead, now the universally respected Mrs. Tattenhall.

The whole party were very merry, for they had good cause to be. Mr. and Mrs. Tattenhall, still in their prime, spread out, enlarged every way, in body and estate, rosy, handsomely dressed, saw around them nothing but prosperity. A paradise of their own, in which they saw their children already developed into that manly and feminine beauty so conspicuous in our kindred of the south; their children already taking root in the land and twining their branches amongst those of other opulent families, they felt the full truth of Robinson's rude salutation, as he exclaimed, on coming to a fresh and more striking view of the house and grounds,—

"Ah! Tattenhall, Tattenhall!" giving him one of his jocose pokes in the side, "didn't I say you knew very well what you were about when you came here, eh? Mrs. Tattenhall, ma'am! Who said it? Robinson, wasn't it, eh?"

When they returned to the house, and had taken tea in a large tent on the lawn, and the young people had played a lively game of romps or bo-peep amongst the bushes of the shrubbery, with much laughter, the great drawing-room was lighted up, and very soon there was heard the sounds of violins and dancing feet. My brother Uriah and his wife were at that moment sitting under the verandah, enjoying the fresh evening air, the scent of tropical trees and flowers which stole silently through the twilight, and the clear, deep blue of the sky, where the magnificent constellations of Orion and the Scorpion were growing momentarily into their full nocturnal splendour. As the music broke out my brother Uriah affectionately pressed the hand of his wife, faithful and who

and encouraging through the times of their difficulty and depression, and saying "Thank God for all this!" the pressure was as affectionately and gratefully returned. Then my brother and his wife rose up, and passed into the blaze of light which surrounded the gay and youthful company within.

THE BARMAID.

SHE was a pretty, gentle girl—a farmer's orphan daughter, and the landlord's niece—whom I strongly suspected of being engaged to be married very shortly, to the writer of the letter that I saw her reading at least twenty times, when I passed the bar, and which I more than believe I saw her kiss one night. She told me a tale of that country which went so pleasantly to the music of her voice, that I ought rather to say it turned itself into verse, than was turned into verse by me.

A little past the village
The inn stood, low and white,
Green shady trees behind it,
And an orchard on the right,
Where over the green paling
The red-checked apples hung,
As if to watch how wearily
The sign-board creaked and swung.

The heavy-laden branches
Over the road hung low,
Reflecting fruit or blossom
In the wayside well below;
Where children, drawing water,
Looked up and paused to see,
Amid the apple branches,
A purple Judas Tree.

The road stretch'd winding onward
For many a weary mile—
So dusty footsore wanderers
Would pause and rest awhile;
And panting horses halted,
And travellers loved to tell
The quiet of the wayside inn,
The orchard, and the well.

Here Maurice dwelt; and often
The sunburnt boy would stand
Gazing upon the distance,
And shading with his hand
His eyes, while watching vainly
For travellers, who might need
His aid to loose the bridle,
And tend the weary steed.

And once (the boy remember'd)
That morning many a day—
The dove lay on the hawthorn,
The bird sang on the spray)
A train of horsemen, nobler
Than he had seen before,
Up from the distance gallopp'd,
And passed before the door.

Upon a milk-white pony,
Rit for a fairy queen,
Was the loveliest little damsel
Whose eyes had ever seen;

A servant-man was holding
The leading rein, to guide
The pony and its mistress
Who cantered by his side.

Her sunny ringlets round her
A golden cloud had made,
While her large hat was keeping
Her calm blue eyes in shade;
One hand held firm the silken reins,
To keep her steed in check,
The other pulled his tangled mane,
Or stroked his glossy neck.

And as the boy brought water,
And loosed the rein, he heard
The sweetest voice, that thank'd him
In one low gentle word;
She turned her blue eyes from him,
Look'd up, and smiled to see
The hanging purple blossoms
Upon the Judas Tree.

And show'd it with a gesture,
Half pleading, half command,
Till he broke the fairest blossom,
And laid it in her hand;
And she tied it to her saddle
With a ribbon from her hair,
While her happy laugh rang gaily,
Like silver on the air.

But the champing steeds were rested—
The horsemen now spur'd on,
And down the dusty highway
They vanish'd and were gone.
Years pass'd, and many a traveller
Paused at the old inn-door,
But the little milk-white pony
And the child return'd no more.

Years pass'd, the apple branches
A deeper shadow shed;
And many a time the Judas Tree,
Blossom and leaf lay dead;
When on the loitering western breeze
Came the bells' merry sound,
And flowery arches rose, and flags
And banners waved around.

And Maurice stood expectant,
The bridal train would stay
Some moments at the inn-door,
The eager watchers say;
They come—the cloud of dust draws near—
Mid all the state and pride,
He only sees the golden hair
And blue eyes of the bride.

The same, yet, ah! still fairer,
He knew the face once more
That bent above the pony's neck
Years past at the inn-door:
Her shy and smiling eyes look'd round,
Unconscious of the place—
Unconscious of the eager gaze
He fix'd upon her face.

He pluck'd a blossom from the tree—
The Judas Tree—and cast
Its purple fragrance towards the bride,
A message from the Past.

The signal came, the horses plunged—
Once more she smiled around :
The purple blossom in the dust
Lay trampled on the ground.

Again the slow years fled,
Their passage only known
By the height the Passion-flower
Around the porch had grown ;
And many a passing traveller
Paused at the old inn-door,
But the bride, so fair and blooming
Return'd there never more.

One winter morning, Maurice,
Watching the branches bare,
Rustling and waving dimly
In the grey and misty air,
Saw blazon'd on a carriage
Once more the well-known shield,
The azure fleurs-de-lis and stars
Upon a silver field.

He looked—was that pale woman,
So grave, so worn, so sad,
The child, once young and smiling,
The bride, once fair and glad ?
What grief had dimm'd that glory
And brought that dark eclipse
Upon her blue eyes' radiance,
And pale'd those trembling lips ?

What memory of past sorrow,
What stab of present pain,
Brought that deep look of anguish,
That watch'd the dismal rain,
That watch'd (with the absent spirit
That looks, yet does not see)
The dead and leafless branches
Upon the Judas Tree.

The slow dark months crept onward
Upon their icy way,
Till April broke in showers,
And Spring smiled forth in May,
Upon the apple-blossoms
The sun shone bright again,
When slowly up the highway
Came a long funeral train.

The bells toll'd slowly, sadly,
For a noble spirit fled ;
Slowly, in pomp and honour,
They bore the quiet dead.
Upon a black-plum'd charger
One rode, who held a shield,
Where azure fleurs-de-lis and stars
Shone on a silver field.

'Mid all that homage given
To a fluttering heart at rest,
Perhaps an honest sorrow
Dwelt only in one breast.
One by the inn-door standing
Watch'd with fast-dropping tears
The long procession passing,
And thought of bygone years.

The boyish, silent homage
To child and bride unknown,
The pitying tender sorrow
Kept in his heart alone,
Now laid upon the coffin
With a purple flower, might be

Told to the cold dead sleeper ;
The rest could only see
A fragrant purple blossom
Pluck'd from a Judas Tree.

THE POOR PENSIONER.

I MET her in the corridor, walking to and fro, and muttering to herself with a down-looking aspect, and a severe economy of dress, the season considered. I wondered how she came there, and was, to say the least of it, decidedly startled when she stopped directly opposite me, and, lifting a pair of blank, brown eyes to my face, said, in a stern voice :

"He was not guilty, my lord judge. God will right him yet. It will all come out some day. I can wait : yes, I can wait. I am more patient than death : I am more patient than injustice."

I made a hasty and undignified retreat down stairs when she left the passage free, and, meeting the waiter, inquired who the woman was. The man touched his forehead significantly, and said that she was harmless (I was very glad to hear it) ; and that she lived on the broken victuals ; and that his mistress always gave her a dinner on Christmas-day. While we were speaking together, she descended to where we stood, and repeated the exact formula of which she had made use before. She was a tall woman, strong-limbed, and thin to meagreness. She might be fifty, or perhaps fifty-five ; her skin was withered, and tanned by exposure to all sorts of weather, and her uncovered hair was burnt to a rusty iron-grey. The waiter suggested to her to go to the kitchen fire ; at which she broke into a scornful laugh, and reiterated, "I am more patient than death. I am more patient than injustice," and then walked out at the open door into the snow.

"I don't think she feels it, sir," said the waiter, opening my door for me to enter.

I do not think she did. I watched her from my window. She took up a handful of the newly-fallen snow and thrust it into her bosom, then hugged it close, as if it were a living thing, that could be warmed by that eager clasp ; I saw also, as she turned, her dark face up towards the sky, that the angry scowl left it. I should imagine that all sensation in her was dead, except in one corner of her heart, to which had gathered the memory of some miserable wrong, whose acuteness would bide with her to the day of her death.

Her name, as I learnt on further inquiry, was Hester. She had been born and bred in the Yorkshire dales ; her parents were of the yeoman class, and poor through improvidence rather than misfortune. As a girl, Hester was remarkable for her pride and her beauty, of which no more relics remained than are left of the summer rose-garden in decay and misty November. She received the scant education commensurate to her condition.

century ago, and grew up a wild, wilful-tempered girl, impatient of all restraint, and eager for change and excitement. At sixteen she married, and very shortly afterwards her husband found it expedient to leave the dales, and to enlist in a regiment which was ordered on foreign service. Hester followed him to India, and led the life of camps for several years. During this interval her family lost sight of her completely; for, having parted in anger, no correspondence was kept up between them. This silence and separation lasted full nine years, during which time, Death dealt hardly with those left at home. Of all the large family of sons and daughters whom the old people had seen grow up to man's and woman's estate, not one survived. Their hearts began to soften towards the offending child, and they made efforts to learn if the regiment to which her husband belonged had returned to England. It had not.

One bleak and wintry night, while the solitary and bereaved couple were sitting by their silent hearth—it was a very lonely and retired spot where the house stood—a heavy step came up the little garden path. Neither of them stirred. They thought it was one of the farm-servants returning from the village, whither he had been sent on some errand. The curtains had not been closed over the window, and all the room, filled with the shine of a yule-tide fire, was visible to the wayfarer without. The mother sat facing the window; lifting her slow, dull gaze from the white wood-ashes on the hearth, she looked across towards it, and uttered a low, frightened cry. She saw a dark face peering in at the glass, which wore the traits of her daughter Hester. She thought it was her wraith, and said so to the old man, who, taking a lantern, went out to see if anybody was lurking about. It was a very boisterous night: loud with wind, and black with clouds of sleety rain. At the threshold he stumbled over a dark form, which had crouched there for the slight shelter afforded by the porch. He lowered the lantern, and threw the light on the face of a woman.

"Dame! dame! It is our bairn: it is lile Hester!"

The mother appeared, and, with a great, gasping cry, recognised her daughter.

They led her into the house, towards the glowing heat of the fire, and set her down by the hearth; for her limbs would scarcely support her. Hester wore a thin and ragged cloak, beneath the folds of which she had hidden her child from the storm. He had fallen asleep in her bosom; but as her mother removed the dripping garment from her shoulders, he woke up with a laugh of childish surprise and pleasure. He was a fine, well-grown boy, of from six to seven years old, and showed none of those signs of want and suffering which had graven premature age upon the wasted features and gaunt

frame of his mother. It was some time before Hester recovered from her frozen exhaustion, and then her first and eager demand was for food for the child.

"O Heaven, pity me!" cried the old woman, who was weeping over the pair. "Hester and her lad starving, while there was to spare at home!"

She supplied their wants soon, and would have taken the boy; but Hester held him to her with a close and jealous grasp, chafing his limbs, warming his little hands in her bosom, and covering his hand with passionate kisses.

He fell asleep in her arms at last; and then she told her brief story. She was widowed; her husband had died in India from wound-fever, and she had been sent home to England; on her arrival there she found herself destitute, and had traversed the country on foot, subsisting by the casual charity of strangers. Thus much she said, and no more. She indulged in no details of her own exquisite sufferings; perhaps they were forgotten, when she ended by saying, "Thank the Lord, the lad is saved!"

Hester lived on at the farm with her parents; and, as the old man failed more and more daily, she took the vigorous management of it upon herself, and things thrived with them. By degrees, her beauty was restored, and then she had repeated offers of marriage; for, the inheritance which would be hers at her father's death was by no means despicable. But, she kept herself single, for the lad's sake. Wilfred grew strong, handsome, and high-spirited—like his mother, indeed, with whom, much as they loved each other, he had many a fierce contention. He never could bear to be thwarted or checked by her, and often Hester, in the bitterness of her unbridled anger, would cry, "O Wilfred! it would have been better for thee and thy mother if we had died on the door-stone in the snow, that night we came home."

Still, she had an intense pride in him; and always, after their quarrels, she allowed his extravagance to have freer scope, though that was what usually led to their disputes. As might have been expected, Wilfred, under such uncertain training, became reckless, wild, and domineering, though he preserved a certain rough generosity and frankness of character which redeemed his faults, and made him a favourite with the country folks, and a sort of king amongst his companions, whose superior in all rustic sports he was.

His grandfather died when he was nineteen; his grandmother, eighteen months later. Then Hester was sole mistress of the little farm. Wilfred soon began to urge his mother to sell the property and leave the dales, whose uneventful quiet fretted his restless disposition. This she absolutely refused to do; and was on one occasion so deeply irritated at his persistence as to say:

"I would sell the Ings to save your life, Wilfred, but for nothing less!"

There was at this time, living on a neighbouring farm, an old man of the name of Price, who had a grand-daughter to keep his house. She was called Nelly; and, besides being a small heiress, was a beauty, and something of a coquette. Nelly had a short, plump little figure; a complexion as soft and clear as a blush-rose, and auburn hair. Wilfred fell in love. He was a tall, hardy, self-willed, and proud young fellow; but in Nelly's hands he was plastic as wax, and weak as water. She encouraged him, teased him, caressed him, mocked him, set him beside himself. She played off all her little witcheries and fascinations upon him; looked sweetly unconscious of their mischievous influence; and, when Wilfred stormed and raved, she laughed in his face. He wanted to marry her immediately; she had played with him long enough, he thought; and one evening when she had been soft and coy, rather than teasing, he put his fortune to the proof. She told him flatly she did not like him—wherein Nelly told anything but the truth, as perhaps better women have done under like circumstance.

Wilfred took her reply in earnest, and went away in a rage—mad, jealous, and burning with passionate disappointment. Hester hated Nelly, and gave her not a few hard words; for in her camp life, the mother had culled some epithets, more expressive than polite, which she used with vigorous truth when her wrath was excited. She kept her son's wound raw and sore by frequent scornful allusions to his "Nelly Graceless," and did her best to widen the breach between them with ample success.

Wilfred stayed away from the Prices for ten whole days.

This desertion did not suit the golden-headed but tinsel-hearted little coquette. She contrived to meet him in a shady wood-walk, where they had often loitered together. He was out with his dog and gun; very ill at ease in mind, for his handsome face looked sullen and dangerous, and he would not see her as she passed by. Mortified and angry, Nelly went home and cried herself ill. Wilfred heard she had caught a fever, and must needs go to ask. She met him at the garden gate, with a smile and a blush; whereat Wilfred was so glad, that he forgot to reproach her. There was, in consequence, a complete reconciliation, ratified by kisses and promises—light coin with beauty Nell, but real heart-gold with poor, infatuated Wilfred. Hester almost despised her son when she heard of it.

"She is only fooling thee, lad!" said she, indignantly. "Come a richer suitor to the door, she'll throw thee over. She is only a light, false-hearted lass, not worth a whistle of thine."

Therein Hester spake truth.

Nelly played with her lover as a cat plays with a mouse. Wilfred urged their marriage. She would one day, and the next day she would not. Then arose other difficulties. Hester did not want an interloper by her fire-side, and would not give up the farm to her son; in fact, she was so jealous of his affection, that the thought of his marriage was hateful to her. Old Price said the young folks might settle with him, if they would; but Nelly liked the house at the Ings better, and thought Wilfred ought to take her there. When he explained that the property was his mother's for her life, she immediately accused him of not loving her, and assumed a decided coldness and repulsiveness of manner. Wilfred, both hurt and angry, tried to give her up, but his bonds were not so easily escaped. If he stayed away from her two days, on the third he was sure to be at her side, either winning her with tender words, or reproaching her with bitter ones. Nelly must have found the game a pleasant one, for she kept it up a long time, undergoing herself as many changes of hue and form as a bubble blown up into the sunshine.

Frequently, during his lengthy visits at the Glebe Farm, Wilfred had encountered a man, Joseph Rigby by name, a dales-yeoman, and one of considerable wealth, but no education. This man was one of the last in the world to excite jealousy; but presently Wilfred was compelled to see that Nelly gave the coarse-mannered, middle-aged Rigby, more of her attentions than consorted with her position as his promised wife. He charged her with the fact. At first she denied it with blushes, and tears, and loud protestations; but at last confessed that Rigby had proposed to her—she did not dare to add that she had half-accepted him. They parted in mutual displeasure; and old Price said, as they agreed so badly, they had better break off the match, and Nelly should marry Joseph Rigby, who was well-to-do, and would know how to keep his wife in order. Wilfred went near her no more.

Presently, it was rumoured in the countryside that Nelly Price and Mr. Rigby were to be married after the October fairs. Hester sneered, prophesied that her rich yeoman would repent his bargain before Saint Mark's, and rejoiced greatly at her son's escape.

Meanwhile, Wilfred went about the farm and the house, silent, moody, and spiritless. He was quite changed, and, as his mother thought, for the better. Instead of associating with his former companions, he stayed much at home, and again renewed his entreaties that his mother would sell the Ings, and leave the dales altogether. He wanted to emigrate. He did not care where they went, so that they got away from that hateful place. Hester was as reluctant as ever to comply; but she modified her refusal—they would try a year longer; if he were still in the same

mind at the end of that period—well, perhaps she would yield to his urgent wishes.

On the morning of the Leeford Fair he left home early, and returned towards dusk—so it was said by Hester. No other person saw him until noon next day. Joseph Rigby was found murdered, and thrown into a gully by the Leeford road, that night. There were traces of a violent struggle upon the road, and the body had been dragged some distance. It had been rifled of money and watch, but a broad engraved ring which Rigby wore on the fourth finger of his left hand, was not removed. He was known to have left the market-hall at Leeford with a considerable sum in gold upon his person, for his brother-in-law had remonstrated with him about carrying so much; but the doomed man made light of his warnings. The whole country-side was up, for the murder was a barbarous one. Suspicion fell at once on Hester's son. His behaviour at Leeford had attracted observation. He had been seen to use angry gestures to Rigby, who had laughed at him, and had offered the young man his hand, as if wishing to be friends; the other had rejected it, and turned away, shaking his clenched fist. He had also been seen to mount his horse at the inn door, and ride off in the afternoon. Rigby started about an hour later, and alone. He was seen no more until his body was found in the ditch by some men going to their work in the morning.

When Wilfred was taken, he and his mother were sitting by the fireside together: she sewing; he reading. It was towards twilight, and he had not been over the threshold all day. He was very down-cast and gloomy; irritable when spoken to, and short in his answers. His mother said to him that he was very strange, and added that she wished he would give over hankering after Nelly Graceless. He laughed painfully, and did not lift his eyes from his book. There was a loud knock at the door. Hester rose and opened it. Three men pushed their way into the house, the foremost asking if her son was at home.

"Yes; he is in there, by the fire. What do you want with him?"

"You must come with us, Mr. Wilfred—nay, it's no use showing fight," cried a burly, muscular fellow, laying his hand heavily on his shoulder; for Wilfred had turned deadly pale, and had attempted to shake off the man's grasp.

"What is it for?" asked Hester, with her eyes on her son.

"God knows.—I don't," said he, quietly.

"Mr. Rigby was robbed and murdered last night, as he came home from Leeford Fair, and suspicion points at your lad, mistress," said the man, who still held his hand on Wilfred's shoulder.

Hester gave utterance to no frantic denials; she laughed, even.

"Why he was at home by this hour yester-

day, in this very room, at his tea. Wasn't he, Jessy?" said she, turning to the maid-servant; who, with a countenance of alarm, stood by the door.

The girl said, "Yes;" then hesitated, and added that she didn't see young master when she brought in tea.

"I was up-stairs," said Wilfred.

"You had better keep all that for another time and place: you must go with us now," observed the man.

Wilfred made no resistance. His mother brought him his coat, and helped him to put it on.

"Say thou didn't do it, Willy—only say so!" whispered she, fiercely.

"I didn't mother: so help me, God!" was his fervent reply.

"You hear him!" cried Hester, turning to the men; "you hear him! He never lied in his days. He might have killed Rigby in a fair fight, or in hot blood; but he is not the lad to lie in wait at night, to murder his enemy and rob him! He is not a thief, this son of mine!"

The officers urged their departure. Wilfred was placed in the vehicle which had been brought for the purpose, and driven off.

"I'll follow thee, Willy!" cried his mother. "Keep up thy heart; they can't touch thee! Good-bye, my poor lad!"

They were out of hearing, and Hester turned back into the house, cursing Nelly Graceless in her heart.

Wilfred was committed to take his trial at the winter gaol-delivery on a charge of wilful murder. The evidence against him was overwhelming. Hester sold the Ings and collected all the money she could, that, if gold would buy his redemption, it might be done; for herself, she had a perfect faith in his innocence, and was confident of his acquittal, but few persons, if any, shared her feelings. The best legal advice had been retained for the accused, and the trial came on shortly before Christmas. Hester was the only witness for her son. The woman Jessy's evidence damaged his cause considerably. She contradicted herself over and over again, and at last, flurried and confused, she burst into tears, crying out that she would say anything to get her young master off. There was nobody to speak with certainty as to the prisoner's having been at home by a certain hour but his mother; he had put his horse into the stable himself, the groom being absent at the fair, and Jessy could not swear that he was in to tea; she believed not; only one cup was used.

Two witnesses, labourers on a farm near the Ings, swore to having seen and spoken to the prisoner after the hour stated; they said he was riding fast, and seemed agitated, but it was too dark to see his face. Nelly Price also had her word against him; it was drawn from her reluctantly, in the midst of shame-faced tears and noisy sobs, but it quite over-

threw the attempt to prove an alibi. She stated that she had watched until dark, in the garden, for Wilfred's return from Leeford, and had not seen him go by. The prisoner never looked towards her, but murmured that he had gone home by the bridle-road and Low Lane to avoid passing the Glebe Farm. The former witnesses, on being recalled, said that it was on the highway, nearly a mile from the place where the lower road branched off, and nearer to the Ings, that they encountered the accused. These two decent men, being strictly cross-examined, never swerved from their first story an iota, and agreed in every particular. They were individuals of decent character; both had worked on the prisoner's farm, and acknowledged him to be a liberal and kind master. Their evidence was not to be shaken. As a final and damning proof of guilt, the watch of which the murdered man had been robbed was produced; it had been found concealed under the thatch of an out-house at the Ings. At this point of the evidence the prisoner was observed to draw himself up and look round defiantly,—despair gave him a fictitious strength, perhaps, or, was it conscious innocence!

Wilfred spoke in his own defence, briefly, but strongly. His life, he said, was sworn away, but he was as guiltless of the crime laid to his charge as any of those gentlemen who sat in judgment upon him. His mother, who had remained in court all the time and had never spoken except when called upon for her evidence, had preserved a stoical calmness throughout. When he ceased to speak however, she cried out in a quivering voice:

"My lad, thy mother believes thee!"

Some friend would have led her out, but she refused to go. The jury gave their verdict of guilty without any recommendation to mercy, and the sentence of death was pronounced. Then it was that Hester rose on her feet and faltered that formula of words with which she had startled me in the corridor:

"He is not guilty, my lord judge. God will right him yet. It will all come out some day. I can wait; yes, I can wait. I am more patient than death. I am more patient than injustice."

Wilfred died stubborn and unconfessing; on the scaffold, with his last breath, he persisted in asserting his innocence. His mother bade him farewell, and was carried to this inn, where she had stayed, raving in a frenzy-fit. For many months she was subject to restraint, but, recovering in some measure, she was at length set at liberty. Her mind was still distraught, however; she wandered back to the dales and to her old home, but the new owner had taken possession, and after enduring her intrusions for some time, he was compelled to apply for her removal.

After this, her money being lost or exhausted, she strayed about the country in a purposeless way; begging or doing day's

work in the field, until she strayed there again, and became the Pensioner of the Holly Tree. The poor demented creature is always treated kindly, but her son's sentence has not yet been reversed in men's judgment. Every morning during the time the judges are in the neighbouring Assize town she waits in one of the streets through which they must pass to reach the court; and as the gilt coach, the noisy trumpets, and the decrepit halberdiers, go by, she scowls at them from beneath her shaggy brows, and mutters her formula of defiance. She will die saying it: comforting her poor, worn, wounded heart with its smarting balm.

Will she find, when she comes before the Tribunal of Eternal Decrees that she has leaned thus long upon a broken reed, or will she find her son there, free from the guilt of blood?

The Great Judge only knows.

THE BILL.

I COULD scarcely believe, when I came to the last word of the foregoing recital and finished it off with a flourish, as I am apt to do when I make an end of any writing, that I had been snowed up a whole week. The time had hung so lightly on my hands, and the Holly-Tree, so bare at first, had borne so many berries for me, that I should have been in great doubt of the fact but for a piece of documentary evidence that lay upon my table.

The road had been dug out of the snow, on the previous day, and the document in question was my Bill. It testified, emphatically, to my having eaten and drunk, and warmed myself, and slept, among the sheltering branches of the Holly-Tree, seven days and nights.

I had yesterday allowed the road twenty-four hours to improve itself, finding that I required that additional margin of time for the completion of my task. I had ordered my Bill to be upon the table, and a chaise to be at the door, "at eight o'clock to-morrow evening." It was eight o'clock to-morrow evening, when I buckled up my travelling writing-desk in its leather case, paid my Bill, and got on my warm coats and wrappers. Of course, no time now remained for my travelling on, to add a frozen tear to the icicles which were doubtless hanging plentifully about the farm-house where I had first seen Angela. What I had to do, was, to get across to Liverpool by the shortest open road, there to meet my heavy baggage and embark. It was quite enough to do, and I had not an hour too much time to do it in.

I had taken leave of all my Holly-Tree friends—almost, for the time being, of my bashfulness too—and was standing for half a minute at the Inn-door, watching the ostler as he took another turn at the cord which tied my portmanteau on the chaise.

when I saw lamps coming down towards the Holly-Tree. The road was so padded with snow that no wheels were audible; but, all of us who were standing at the Inn-door, saw lamps coming on, and at a lively rate too, between the walls of snow that had been heaped up, on either side of the track. The chamber-maid instantly divined how the case stood, and called to the ostler: "Tom, this is a Gretna job!" The ostler, knowing that her sex instinctively scented a marriage or anything in that direction, rushed up the yard, bawling, "Next four out!" and in a moment the whole establishment was thrown into commotion.

I had a melancholy interest in seeing the happy man who loved and was beloved; and, therefore, instead of driving off at once, I remained at the Inn-door when the fugitives drove up. A bright-eyed fellow, muffled in a mantle, jumped out so briskly that he almost overthrew me. He turned to apologise, and, by Heaven, it was Edwin!

"Charley!" said he, recoiling. "Gracious powers, what do you do here!"

"Edwin," said I, recoiling, "Gracious powers, what do you do here!" I struck my forehead as I said it, and an insupportable blaze of light seemed to shoot before my eyes.

He hurried me into the little parlor (always kept with a slow fire in it and no poker), where posting company waited while their horses were putting to; and, shutting the door, said:

"Charley, forgive me!"

"Edwin!" I returned. "Was this well? When I loved her so dearly! When I had garnered up my heart so long!" I could say no more.

He was shocked when he saw how moved I was, and made the cruel observation, that he had not thought I should have taken it so much to heart.

I looked at him. I reproached him no more. But I looked at him.

"My dear, dear Charley," said he; "don't think ill of me, I beseech you! I know you have a right to my utmost confidence, and, believe me, you have ever had it until now. I abhor secrecy. Its meanness is intolerable to me. But, I and my dear girl have observed it for your sake."

He and his dear girl! It steeled me.

"You have observed it for my sake, sir?" said I, wondering how his frank face could face it out so.

"Yes!—and Angela's," said he.

I found the room reeling round in an uncertain way, like a laboring humming-top. "Explain yourself," said I, holding on by one hand to an arm-chair.

"Dear old darling Charley!" returned Edwin, in his cordial manner, "consider! When you were going on so happily with Angela, why should I compromise you with the old gentleman by making you a party to our engagement, and (after he had declined my proposals) to our secret intention? Surely it was better that you should be able honorably to say, 'He never took counsel with me, never told me, never breathed a word of it.' If Angela suspected it and showed me all the favor and support she could—God bless her for a precious creature and a priceless wife!—I couldn't help that. Neither I nor Emmeline ever told her, any more than we told you. And for the same good reason, Charley; trust me, for the same good reason, and no other upon earth!"

Emmeline was Angela's cousin. Lived with her. Had been brought up with her. Was her father's ward. Had property.

"Emmeline is in the chaise, my dear Edwin!" said I, embracing him with the greatest affection.

"My good fellow!" said he, "Do you suppose I should be going to Gretna Green without her!"

I ran out with Edwin, I opened the chaise door, I took Emmeline in my arms, I folded her to my heart. She was wrapped in soft white fur, like the snowy landscape; but was warm, and young, and lovely. I put their leaders to with my own hands, I gave the boys a five-pound note a-piece, I cheered them as they drove away, I drove the other way myself as hard as I could pelt.

I never went to Liverpool, I never went to America, I went straight back to London, and I married Angela. I have never until this time, even to her, disclosed the secret of my character, and the mistrust and the mistaken journey into which it led me. When she, and they, and our eight children and their seven—I mean Edwin's and Emmeline's, whose eldest girl is old enough now to wear white fur herself, and to look very like her mother in it—come to read these pages, as of course they will, I shall hardly fail to be found out at last. Never mind! I can bear it. I began at the Holly-Tree, by idle accident, to associate the Christmas time of year with human interest, and with some inquiry into, and some care for, the lives of those by whom I find myself surrounded. I hope that I am none the worse for it, and that no one near me or afar off is the worse for it. And I say, May the green Holly-Tree flourish, striking its roots deep into our English ground, and having its germinating qualities carried by the birds of Heaven all over the world!

THE WRECK GOLDEN MARY.

BEING THE CAPTAIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE LOSS OF THE SHIP, AND THE
MATE'S ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT DELIVERANCE OF HER PEOPLE IN
AN OPEN BOAT AT SEA.

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD WORDS.
CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF ONE NUMBER AND A HALF.

CHRISTMAS, 1856.

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THE WRECK.

I WAS apprenticed to the Sea when I was twelve years old, and I have encountered a great deal of rough weather, both literal and metaphorical. It has always been my opinion since I first possessed such a thing as an opinion, that the man who knows only one subject is next tiresome to the man who knows no subject. Therefore, in the course of my life I have taught myself whatever I could, and although I am not an educated man, I am able, I am thankful to say, to have an intelligent interest in most things.

A person might suppose, from reading the above, that I am in the habit of holding forth about number one. That is not the case. Just as if I was to come into a room among strangers, and must either be introduced or introduce myself, so I have taken the liberty of passing these few remarks, simply and plainly that it may be known who and what I am. I will add no more of the sort than that my name is William George Ravender, that I was born at Penrith half a year after my own father was drowned, and that I am on the second day of this present blessed Christmas week of one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six, fifty-six years of age.

When the rumour first went flying up and down that there was gold in California—which, as most people know, was before it was discovered in the British colony of Australia—I was in the West Indies, trading among the Islands. Being in command and likewise part-owner of a smart schooner, I had my work cut out for me, and I was doing it. Consequently, gold in California was no business of mine.

But, by the time when I came home to

England again, the thing was as clear as your hand held up before you at noon-day. There was Californian gold in the museums and in the goldsmiths' shops, and the very first time I went upon 'Change, I met a friend of mine (a seafaring man like myself), with a Californian nugget hanging to his watch-chain. I handled it. It was as like a peeled walnut with bits unevenly broken off here and there, and then electrotyped all over, as ever I saw anything in my life.

I am a single man (she was too good for this world and for me, and she died six weeks before our marriage-day), so when I am ashore, I live in my house at Poplar. My house at Poplar is taken care of and kept ship-shape by, an old lady who was my mother's maid before I was born. She is as handsome and as upright as any old lady in the world. She is as fond of me as if she had ever had an only son, and I was he. Well do I know wherever I sail that she never lays down her head at night without having said, "Merciful Lord! bless and preserve William George Ravender, and send him safe home, through Christ our Saviour!" I have thought of it in many a dangerous moment, when it has done me no harm, I am sure.

In my house at Poplar, along with this old lady, I lived quiet for best part of a year: having had a long spell of it among the Islands, and having (which was very uncommon in me) taken the fever rather badly. At last, being strong and hearty, and having read every book I could lay hold of, right out, I was walking down Leadenhall Street in the City of London, thinking of turning to again, when I met what I call Smithick and

Watersby of Liverpool. I chanced to lift up my eyes from looking in at a ship's chronometer in a window, and I saw him bearing down upon me, head on.

It is, personally, neither Smithick, nor Watersby, that I here mention, nor was I ever acquainted with any man of either of those names, nor do I think that there has been any one of either of those names in that Liverpool House for years back. But, it is in reality the House itself that I refer to; and a wiser merchant or a truer gentleman never stepped.

"My dear Captain Ravender," says he. "Of all the men on earth, I wanted to see you most. I was on my way to you."

"Well!" says I. "That looks as if you were to see me, don't it?" With that, I put my arm in his, and we walked on towards the Royal Exchange, and, when we got there, walked up and down at the back of it where the Clock-Tower is. We walked an hour and more, for he had much to say to me. He had a scheme for chartering a new ship of their own to take out cargo to the diggers and emigrants in California, and to buy and bring back gold. Into the particulars of that scheme I will not enter, and I have no right to enter. All I say of it, is, that it was a very original one, a very fine one, a very sound one, and a very lucrative one, beyond doubt.

He imparted it to me as freely as if I had been a part of himself. After doing so, he made me the handsomest sharing offer that ever was made to me, boy or man—or I believe to any other captain in the Merchant Navy—and he took this round turn to finish with:

"Ravender, you are well aware that the lawlessness of that coast and country at present, is as special as the circumstances in which it is placed. Crews of vessels outward-bound, desert as soon as they make the land; crews of vessels homeward-bound, ship at enormous wages, with the express intention of murdering the captain and seizing the gold freight; no man can trust another, and the devil seems let loose. Now," says he, "you know my opinion of you, and you know I am only expressing it, and with no singularity, when I tell you that you are almost the only man on whose integrity, discretion, and energy—" &c., &c. For, I don't want to repeat what he said, though I was and am sensible of it.

Notwithstanding my being, as I have mentioned, quite ready for a voyage, still I had some doubts of this voyage. Of course I knew, without being told, that there were peculiar difficulties and dangers in it, a long way over and above those which attend all voyages. It must not be supposed that I was afraid to face them; but, in my opinion a man has no manly motive or sustainment in his own breast for facing dangers, unless he has well considered what they are, and is able quietly to say to himself, "None of these

perils can now take me by surprise; I shall know what to do for the best in any of them; all the rest lies in the higher and greater hands to which I humbly commit myself." On this principle I have so attentively considered (regarding it as my duty) all the hazards I have ever been able to think of, in the ordinary way of storm, shipwreck, and fire at sea, that I hope I should be prepared to do, in any of those cases, whatever could be done, to save the lives entrusted to my charge.

As I was thoughtful, my good friend proposed that he should leave me to walk there as long as I liked, and that I should dine with him by-and-by at his club in Pall Mall. I accepted the invitation, and I walked up and down there, quarter-deck fashion, a matter of a couple of hours; now and then looking up at the weathercock as I might have looked up aloft; and now and then taking a look into Cornhill, as I might have taken a look over the side.

All dinner-time, and all after-dinner-time, we talked it over again. I gave him my views of his plan, and he very much approved of the same. I told him I had nearly decided, but not quite. "Well, well," says he, "come down to Liverpool to-morrow with me, and see the Golden Mary." I liked the name (her name was Mary, and she was golden, if golden stands for good), so I began to feel that it was almost done when I said I would go to Liverpool. On the next morning but one we were on board the Golden Mary. I might have known, from his asking me to come down and see her, what she was. I declare her to have been the completest and most exquisite Beauty that ever I set my eyes upon.

We had inspected every timber in her, and had come back to the gangway to go ashore from the dock-basin, when I put out my hand to my friend. "Touch upon it," says I, "and touch heartily. I take command of this ship, and I am, hers and yours, if I can get John Steadiman for my chief mate."

John Steadiman had sailed with me four voyages. The first voyage, John was third mate out to China, and came home second. The other three voyages, he was my first officer. At this time of chartering the Golden Mary, he was aged thirty-two. A brisk, bright, blue-eyed fellow, a very neat figure and rather under the middle size, never out of the way and never in it, a face that pleased everybody and that all children took to, a habit of going about singing as cheerily as a blackbird, and a perfect sailor.

We were in one of those Liverpool hackney-coaches in less than a minute, and we cruised about in her upwards of three hours, looking for John. John had come home from Van Diemen's Land barely a month before, and I had heard of him as taking a frisk in Liverpool. We asked after him, among many other places, at the two boarding-houses he

was fondest of, and we found he had had a week's spell at each of them; but, he had gone here and gone there, and had set off "to lay out on the main-to'-gallant-yard of the highest Welsh mountain" (so he had told the people of the house), and where he might be then, or when he might come back nobody could tell us. But it was surprising, to be sure, to see how every face brightened the moment there was mention made of the name of Mr. Steadiman.

We were taken aback at meeting with no better luck, and we had worse ship and put her head for my friends, when, as we were jogging through the streets, I clap my eyes on John himself coming out of a toyshop! He was carrying a little boy, and conducting two uncommon pretty women to their coach, and he told me afterwards that he had never in his life seen one of the three before, but that he was so taken with them on looking in at the toy-shop while they were buying the child a cranky Noah's Ark, very much down by the head, that he had gone in and asked the "ladies" permission to treat him to a tolerably correct Cutter there was in the window, in order that such a handsome boy might not grow up with a lubberly idea of naval architecture.

We stood off and on until the ladies' coachman began to give way, and then we hailed John. On his coming aboard of us, I told him, very gravely, what I had said to my friend. It struck him, as he said himself, amidsthips. He was quite shaken by it. "Captain Ravender," were John Steadiman's words, "such an opinion from you is true commendation, and I'll sail round the world with you for twenty years if you hoist the signal, and stand by you for ever!" And now indeed I felt that it was done, and that the Golden Mary was afloat.

Grass never grew yet under the feet of Smithick and Watersby. The riggers were out of that ship in a fortnight's time, and we had begun taking in cargo. John was always aboard, seeing everything stowed with his own eyes; and whenever I went aboard myself, early or late, whether he was below in the hold, or on deck at the hatchway, or overhauling his cabin, nailing up pictures in it of the Blush Roses of England, the Blue Belles of Scotland, and the female Shamrock of Ireland: of a certainty I heard John singing like a blackbird.

We had room for twenty passengers. Our sailing advertisement was no sooner out, than we might have taken these twenty times over. In entering our men, I and John (both together) picked them, and we entered none but good hands—as good as were to be found in that port. And so, in a good ship of the best build, well owned, well arranged, well officered, well manned, well found in all respects, we parted with our pilot at a quarter past four o'clock in the afternoon of the seventh of March, one thou-

sand eight hundred and fifty-one, and stood with a fair wind out to sea.

It may be easily believed that up to that time I had had no leisure to be intimate with my passengers. The most of them were then in their berths sea-sick; however, in going among them, telling them what was good for them, persuading them not to be there, but to come up on deck and feel the breeze, and in rousing them with a joke, or a comfortable word, I made acquaintance with them, perhaps, in a more friendly and confidential way from the first, than I might have done at the cabin table.

Of my passengers, I need only particularise, just at present, a bright-eyed, blooming young wife who was going out to join her husband in California, taking with her their only child, a little girl of three years old, whom he had never seen; a sedate young woman in black, some five years older (about thirty, as I should say), who was going out to join a brother; and an old gentleman, a good deal like a hawk if his eyes had been better and not so red, who was always talking, morning, noon, and night, about the gold discovery. But, whether he was making the voyage, thinking his old arms could dig for gold, or whether his speculation was to buy it, or, to barter for it, or to cheat for it, or to snatch it anyhow from other people, was his secret. He kept his secret.

These three and the child were the soonest well. The child was a most engaging child, to be sure, and very fond of me: though I am bound to admit that John Steadiman and I were borne on her pretty little books in reverse order, and that he was captain there, and I was mate. It was beautiful to watch her with John, and it was beautiful to watch John with her. Few would have thought it possible, to see John playing at bo-peep round the mast, that he was the man who had caught up an iron bar and struck a Malay and a Maltese dead, as they were gliding with their knives down the cabin stair aboard the barque Old England, when the captain lay ill in his cot, off Saugar Point. But he was; and give him his back against a bulwark, he would have done the same by half a dozen of them. The name of the young mother was Mrs. Atherfield, the name of the young lady in black was Miss Coleshaw, and the name of the old gentleman was Mr. Rarr.

As the child had a quantity of shining fair hair, clustering in curls all about her face, and as her name was Lucy, Steadiman gave her the name of the Golden Lucy. So, we had the Golden Lucy and the Golden Mary; and John kept up the idea to that extent as he and the child went playing about the decks, that I believe she used to think the ship was alive somehow—a sister or companion, going to the same place as herself. She liked to be by the wheel, and in fine weather, I have often stood by the man

whose trick it was at the wheel, only to hear her, sitting near my feet, talking to the ship. Never had a child such a doll before, I suppose; but she made a doll of the Golden Mary, and used to dress her up by tying ribbons and little bits of finery to the belaying-pins; and nobody ever moved them, unless it was to save them from being blown away.

Of course I took charge of the two young women, and I called them "my dear," and they never minded, knowing that whatever I said was said in a fatherly and protecting spirit. I gave them their places on each side of me at dinner, Mrs. Atherfield on my right and Miss Coleshaw on my left; and I directed the unmarried lady to serve out the breakfast, and the married lady to serve out the tea. Likewise I said to my black steward in their presence, "Tom Snow, these two ladies are equally the mistresses of this house, and do you obey their orders equally;" at which Tom laughed, and they all laughed.

Old Mr. Rarx was not a pleasant man to look at, nor yet to talk to, or to be with, for no one could help seeing that he was a sordid and selfish character, and that he had warped further and further out of the straight with time. Not but what he was on his best behaviour with us, as everybody was; for, we had no bickering among us, for'ard or aft. I only mean to say, he was not the man one would have chosen for a messmate. If choice there had been, one might even have gone a few points out of one's course, to say, "No! Not him!" But, there was one curious inconsistency in Mr. Rarx. That was, that he took an astonishing interest in the child. He looked, and, I may add, he was, one of the last of men to care at all for a child, or to care much for any human creature. Still, he went so far as to be habitually uneasy, if the child was long on deck, out of his sight. He was always afraid of her falling overboard, or falling down a hatchway, or of a block or what not coming down upon her from the rigging in the working of the ship, or of her getting some hurt or other. He used to look at her and touch her, as if she was something precious to him. He was always solicitous about her not injuring her health, and constantly entreated her mother to be careful of it. This was so much the more curious, because the child did not like him, but used to shrink away from him, and would not even put out her hand to him without coaxing from others. I believe that every soul on board frequently noticed this, and that not one of us understood it. However, it was such a plain fact, that John Steadiman said more than once when old Mr. Rarx was not within earshot, that if the Golden Mary felt a tenderness for the dear old gentleman she carried in her lap, she must be bitterly jealous of the Golden Lucy.¹²

Before I go any further with this narrative,

I will state that our ship was a barque of three hundred tons, carrying a crew of eighteen men, a second mate in addition to John, a carpenter, an armourer or smith, and two apprentices (one a Scotch boy, poor little fellow). We had three boats; the Long-boat, capable of carrying twenty-five men; the Cutter, capable of carrying fifteen; and the Surf-boat, capable of carrying ten. I put down the capacity of these boats according to the numbers they were really meant to hold.

We had tastes of bad weather and headwinds, of course; but, on the whole we had as fine a run as any reasonable man could expect, for sixty days. I then began to enter two remarks in the ship's Log and in my Journal; first, that there was an unusual and amazing quantity of ice; second, that the nights were most wonderfully dark, in spite of the ice.

For five days and a half, it seemed quite useless and hopeless to alter the ship's course so as to stand out of the way of this ice. I made what southing I could; but, all that time, we were beset by it. Mrs. Atherfield after standing by me on deck once, looking for some time in an awed manner at the great bergs that surrounded us, said in a whisper, "O! Captain Ravender, it looks as if the whole solid earth had changed into ice, and broken up!" I said to her, laughing, "I don't wonder that it does, to your inexperienced eyes, my dear." But I had never seen a twentieth part of the quantity, and, in reality, I was pretty much of her opinion.

However, at two P.M. on the afternoon of the sixth day, that is to say, when we were sixty-six days out, John Steadiman who had gone aloft, sang out from the top, that the sea was clear ahead. Before four P.M. a strong breeze springing up right astern, we were in open water at sunset. The breeze then freshening into half a gale of wind, and the Golden Mary being a very fast sailer, we went before the wind merrily, all night.

I had thought it impossible that it could be darker than it had been, until the sun, moon, and stars should fall out of the Heavens, and Time should be destroyed; but, it had been next to light, in comparison with what it was now. The darkness was so profound, that looking into it was painful and oppressive—like looking, without a ray of light, into a dense black bandage put as close before the eyes as it could be, without touching them. I doubled the look-out, and John and I stood in the bow side-by-side, never leaving it all night. Yet I should no more have known that he was near me when he was silent, without putting out my arm and touching him, than I should if he had turned in and been fast asleep below. We were not so much looking out, all of us, as listening to the utmost, both with our eyes and ears.

Next day, I found that the mercury in the barometer, which had risen steadily since we

cleared the ice, remained steady. I had had very good observations, with now and then the interruption of a day or so, since our departure. I got the sun at noon, and found that we were in Lat. 58° S., Long. 60° W., off New South Shetland; in the neighbourhood of Cape Horn. We were sixty-seven days out, that day. The ship's reckoning was accurately worked and made up. The ship did her duty admirably, all on board were well, and all hands were as smart, efficient, and contented, as it was possible to be.

When the night came on again as dark as before, it was the eighth night I had been on deck. Nor had I taken more than a very little sleep in the day-time, my station being always near the helm, and often at it, while we were among the ice. Few but those who have tried it can imagine the difficulty and pain of only keeping the eyes open—physically open—under such circumstances, in such darkness. They get struck by the darkness, and blinded by the darkness. They make patterns in it, and they flash in it, as if they had gone out of your head to look at you. On the turn of midnight, John Steadiman, who was alert and fresh (for I had always made him turn in by day), said to me, "Captain Ravender, I entreat of you to go below. I am sure you can hardly stand, and your voice is getting weak, sir. Go below, and take a little rest. I'll call you if a block chafea." I said to John in answer, "Well, well, John! Let us wait till the turn of one o'clock, before we talk about that." I had just had one of the ship's lanterns held up, that I might see how the night went by my watch, and it was then twenty minutes after twelve.

At five minutes before one, John sang out to the boy to bring the lantern again, and, when I told him once more what the time was, entreated and prayed of me to go below. "Captain Ravender," says he, "all's well; we can't afford to have you laid up for a single hour; and I respectfully and earnestly beg of you to go below." The end of it was, that I agreed to do so, on the understanding that if I failed to come up of my own accord within three hours, I was to be punctually called. Having settled that, I left John in charge. But, I called him to me once afterwards, to ask him a question. I had been to look at the barometer, and had seen the mercury still perfectly steady, and had come up the companion again, to take a last look about me—if I can use such a word in reference to such darkness—when I thought that the waves, as the *Golden Mary* parted them and shook them off, had a hollow sound in them; something that I fancied was a rather unusual reverberation. I was standing by the quarter-deck rail on the starboard side, when I called John aft to me, and bade him listen. He did so with the greatest attention. Turning to me he then said, "Rely upon it, Captain Ravender, you have been

without rest too long, and the novelty is only in the state of your sense of hearing." I thought so too by that time, and I think so now, though I can never know for absolute certain in this world, whether it was or not.

When I left John Steadiman in charge, the ship was still going at a great rate through the water. The wind still blew right astern. Though she was making great way, she was under shortened sail, and had no more than she could easily carry. All was snug, and nothing complained. There was a pretty sea running, but not a very high sea neither, nor at all a confused one.

I turned in, as we seamen say, all standing. The meaning of that, is, I did not pull my clothes off—no, not even so much as my coat: though I did my shoes, for my feet were badly swelled with the deck. There was a little swing-lamp alight in my cabin. I thought, as I looked at it before shutting my eyes, that I was so tired of darkness, and troubled by darkness, that I could have gone to sleep best in the midst of a million of flaming gas-lights. That was the last thought I had before I went off, except the prevailing thought that I should not be able to get to sleep at all.

I dreamed that I was back at Penrith again, and was trying to get round the church, which had altered its shape very much since I last saw it, and was cloven all down the middle of the steeple in a most singular manner. Why I wanted to get round the church, I don't know; but, I was as anxious to do it as if my life depended on it. Indeed, I believe I did, in the dream. For all that, I could not get round the church. I was still trying, when I came against it with a violent shock, and was flung out of my cot against the ship's side. Shrieks and a terrific outcry struck me far harder than the bruising timbers, and amidst sounds of grinding and crashing, and a heavy rushing and breaking of water—sounds I understood too well—I made my way on deck. It was not an easy thing to do, for the ship heeled over frightfully, and was beating in a furious manner.

I could not see the men as I went forward, but I could hear that they were hauling in sail, in disorder. I had my trumpet in my hand, and, after directing and encouraging them in this till it was done, I hailed first John Steadiman, and then my second mate, Mr. William Rames. Both answered clearly and steadily. Now, I had practised them and all my crew, as I have ever made it a custom to practise all who sail with me, to take certain stations, and wait my orders, in case of any unexpected crisis. When my voice was heard hailing, and their voices were heard answering, I was aware, through all the noises of the ship and sea, and all the crying of the passengers below, that there was a pause. "Are you ready, Rames?"—"Aye, aye, sir!"—"Then light up, for God's sake!" In a moment he and another were

burning blue-lights, and the ship and all on board seemed to be enclosed in a mist of light, under a great black dome.

The light shone up so high that I could see the huge iceberg upon which we had struck, cloven at the top and down the middle, exactly like Penrith Church in my dream. At the same moment I could see the watch last relieved, crowding up and down on deck; I could see Mrs. Atherfield and Miss Coleshaw thrown about on the top of the companion as they struggled to bring the child up from below; I could see that the masts were going with the shock and the beating of the ship; I could see the frightful breach stove in on the starboard side, half the length of the vessel, and the sheathing and timbers spirting up; I could see that the Cutter was disabled, in a wreck of broken fragments; and I could see every eye turned upon me. It is my belief that if there had been ten thousand eyes there, I should have seen them all, with their different looks. And all this in a moment. But you must consider what a moment.

I saw the men, as they looked at me, fall towards their appointed stations, like good men and true. If she had not righted, they could have done very little there or anywhere but die—not that it is little for a man to die at his post—I mean they could have done nothing to save the passengers and themselves. Happily, however, the violence of the shock with which we had so determinedly borne down direct on that fatal iceberg, as if it had been our destination instead of our destruction, had so smashed and pounded the ship that she got off in this same instant, and righted. I did not want the carpenter to tell me she was filling and going down; I could see and hear that. I gave Rames the word to lower the Long-boat and the Surf-boat, and I myself told off the men for each duty. Not one hung back, or came before the other. I now whispered to John Steadiman, "John, I stand at the gangway here, to see every soul on board safe over the side. You shall have the next post of honor, and shall be the last but one to leave the ship. Bring up the passengers, and range them behind me; and put what provision and water you can get at, in the boats. Cast your eye forward, John, and you'll see you have not a moment to lose."

My noble fellows got the boats over the side, as orderly as I ever saw boats lowered with any sea running, and, when they were launched, two or three of the nearest men in them as they held on, rising and falling with the swell, called out, looking up at me, "Captain Ravender, if anything goes wrong with us and you are saved, remember we stood by you!"—"We'll all stand by one another ashore, yet, please God, my lads!" says I. "Hold on bravely, and be tender with the women."

The women were an example to us. They trembled very much, but they were quiet

and perfectly collected. "Kiss me, Captain Ravender," says Mrs. Atherfield, "and God in Heaven bless you, you good man!" "My dear," says I, "those words are better for me than a life-boat." I held her child in my arms till she was in the boat, and then kissed the child and handed her safe down. I now said to the people in her, "You have got your freight, my lads, all but me, and I am not coming yet awhile. Pull away from the ship, and keep off!"

That was the Long-boat. Old Mr. Rarx was one of her complement, and he was the only passenger who had greatly misbehaved since the ship struck. Others had been a little wild, which was not to be wondered at, and not very blameable; but, he had made a lamentation and uproar which it was dangerous for the people to hear, as there is always contagion in weakness and selfishness. His incessant cry had been that he must not be separated from the child, that he couldn't see the child, and that he and the child must go together. He had even tried to wrest the child out of my arms, that he might keep her in his. "Mr. Rarx," said I to him when it came to that, "I have a loaded pistol in my pocket, and if you don't stand out of the gangway, and keep perfectly quiet, I shall shoot you through the heart, if you have got one." Says he, "You won't do murder, Captain Ravender?" "No, sir," says I, "I won't murder forty-four people to humour you, but I'll shoot you to save them." After that, he was quiet, and stood shivering a little way off, until I named him to go over the side.

The Long-boat being cast off, the Surf-boat was soon filled. There only remained aboard the Golden Mary, John Mullion the man who had kept on burning the blue-lights (and who had lighted every new one at every old one before it went out, as quietly as if he had been at an illumination); John Steadiman; and myself. I hurried those two into the Surf-boat, called to them to keep off, and waited with a grateful and relieved heart for the Long-boat to come and take me in, if she could. I looked at my watch, and it showed me, by the blue-light, ten minutes past two. They lost no time. As soon as she was near enough, I swung myself in to her, and called to the men, "With a will, lads! She's reeling!" We were not an inch too far out of the inner vortex of her going down, when, by the blue-light which John Mullion still burnt in the bow of the Surf-boat, we saw her lurch, and plunge to the bottom head-foremost. The child cried, weeping wildly, "O the dear Golden Mary! O look at her! Save her! Save the poor Golden Mary!" And then the light burnt out, and the black dome seemed to come down upon us.

I suppose if we had all stood a-top of a mountain, and seen the whole remainder of the world sink away from under us, we could hardly have felt more shocked and solitary

than we did when we knew we were alone on the wide ocean, and that the beautiful ship in which most of us had been securely asleep within half an hour was gone for ever. There was an awful silence in our boat, and such a kind of palsy on the rowers and the man at the rudder, that I felt they were scarcely keeping her before the sea. I spoke out then, and said, "Let every one here thank the Lord, for our preservation!" All the voices answered (even the child's), "We thank the Lord!" I then said the Lord's Prayer, and all hands said it after me with a solemn murmuring. Then I gave the word "Cheerily, O men, Cheerily!" and I felt that they were handling the boat again as a boat ought to be handled.

The Surf-boat now burnt another blue-light to show us where they were, and we made for her, and laid ourselves as nearly alongside of her as we dared. I had always kept my boats with a coil or two of good stout stuff in each of them, so both boats had a rope at hand. We made a shift, with much labor and trouble, to get near enough to one another to divide the blue-lights (they were no use after that night, for the sea-water soon got at them), and to get a tow-rope out between us. All night long we kept together, sometimes obliged to cast off the rope, and sometimes getting it out again, and all of us wearying for the morning—which appeared so long in coming that old Mr. Rarx screamed out, in spite of his fears of me, "The world is drawing to an end, and the sun will never rise any more!"

When the day broke, I found that we were all huddled together in a miserable manner. We were deep in the water; being, as I found on mustering, thirty-one in number, or at least six too many. In the Surf-boat they were fourteen in number, being at least four too many. The first thing I did, was to get myself passed to the rudder—which I took from that time—and to get Mrs. Atherfield, her child, and Miss Colshaw, passed on to sit next me. As to old Mr. Rarx, I put him in the bow, as far from us as I could. And I put some of the best men near us, in order that if I should drop, there might be a skilful hand ready to take the helm.

The Sea moderating as the sun came up, though the sky was cloudy and wild, we spoke the other boat, to know what stores they had, and to overhaul what we had. I had a compass in my pocket, a small telescope, a double-barrelled pistol, a knife, and a fire-box and matches. Most of my men had knives, and some had a little tobacco: some, a pipe as well. We had a mug among us, and an iron-spoon. As to provisions, there were in my boat two bags of biscuit, one piece of raw beef, one piece of raw pork, a bag of coffee, roasted but not ground (thrown in, I imagine, by mistake, for something else), two small casks of water, and about half-a-gallon of rum in a keg. The Surf-boat, having

rather more rum than we, and fewer to drink it, gave us, as I estimated, another quart into our keg. In return, we gave them three double-handfuls of coffee, tied up in a piece of a handkerchief; they reported that they had aboard besides, a bag of biscuit, a piece of beef, a small cask of water, a small box of lemons, and a Dutch cheese. It took a long time to make these exchanges, and they were not made without risk to both parties; the sea running quite high enough to make our approaching near to one another very hazardous. In the bundle with the coffee, I conveyed to John Steadiman (who had a ship's compass with him), a paper written in pencil, and torn from my pocket-book, containing the course I meant to steer, in the hope of making land, or being picked up by some vessel—I say in the hope, though I had little hope of either deliverance. I then sang out to him, so as all might hear, that if we two boats could live or die together, we would; but, that if we should be parted by the weather, and join company no more, they should have our prayers and blessings, and we asked for theirs. We then gave them three cheers, which they returned, and I saw the men's heads droop in both boats as they fell to their oars again.

These arrangements had occupied the general attention advantageously for all, though (as I expressed in the last sentence) they ended in a sorrowful feeling. I now said a few words to my fellow-voyagers on the subject of the small stock of food on which our lives depended if they were preserved from the great deep, and on the rigid necessity of our eking it out in the most frugal manner. One and all replied that whatever allowance I thought best to lay down should be strictly kept to. We made a pair of scales out of a thin scrap of iron-plating and some twine, and I got together for weights such of the heaviest buttons among us as I calculated made up some fraction over two ounces. This was the allowance of solid food served out once a-day to each, from that time to the end; with the addition of a coffee-berry, or sometimes half a one, when the weather was very fair, for breakfast. We had nothing else whatever, but half a pint of water each per day, and sometimes, when we were coldest and weakest, a teaspoonful of rum each, served out as a dram. I know how learnedly it can be shown that rum is poison, but I also know that in this case, as in all similar cases I have ever read of—which are numerous—no words can express the comfort and support derived from it. Nor have I the least doubt that it saved the lives of far more than half our number. Having mentioned half a pint of water as our daily allowance, I ought to observe that sometimes we had less, and sometimes we had more; for, much rain fell, and we caught it in a canvas stretched for the purpose.

Thus, at that tempestuous time of the

year, and in that tempestuous part of the world, we shipwrecked people rose and fell with the waves. It is not my intention to relate (if I can avoid it), such circumstances appertaining to our doleful condition as have been better told in many other narratives of the kind than I can be expected to tell them. I will only note, in so many passing words, that day after day and night after night, we received the sea upon our backs to prevent it from swamping the boat; that one party was always kept baling, and that every hat and cap among us soon got worn out, though patched up fifty times, as the only vessels we had for that service; that another party lay down in the bottom of the boat, while a third rowed; and that we were soon all in boils and blisters and rags.

The other boat was a source of such anxious interest to all of us that I used to wonder whether, if we were saved, the time could ever come when the survivors in this boat of ours could be at all indifferent to the fortunes of the survivors in that. We got out a tow-rope whenever the weather permitted, but that did not often happen, and how we two parties kept within the same horizon, as we did. He, who mercifully permitted it to be so for our consolation, only knows. I never shall forget the looks with which, when the morning light came, we used to gaze about us over the stormy waters, for the other boat. We once parted company for seventy-two hours, and we believed them to have gone down, as they did us. The joy on both sides when we came within view of one another again, had something in a manner Divine in it; each was so forgetful of individual suffering, in tears of delight and sympathy for the people in the other boat.

I have been wanting to get round to the individual or personal part of my subject, as I call it, and the foregoing incident puts me in the right way. The patience and good disposition aboard of us, was wonderful. I was not surprised by it in the women; for, all men born of women know what great qualities they will show when men will fail; but, I own I was a little surprised by it in some of the men. Among one-and-thirty people assembled at the best of times, there will usually, I should say, be two or three uncertain tempers. I knew that I had more than one rough temper with me among my own people, for I had chosen those for the Long-boat that I might have them under my eye. But, they softened under their misery, and were as considerate of the ladies, and as compassionate of the child, as the best among us, or among men—they could not have been more so. I heard scarcely any complaining. The party lying down would moan a good deal in their sleep, and I would often notice a man—not always the same man, it is to be understood, but nearly all of them at one time or other—sitting moaning at his oar, or

in his place, as he looked mistily over the sea. When it happened to be long before I could catch his eye, he would go on moaning all the time in the dimmest manner; but, when our looks met, he would brighten and leave off. I almost always got the impression that he did not know what sound he had been making, but that he thought he had been humming a tune.

Our sufferings from cold and wet, were far greater than our sufferings from hunger. We managed to keep the child warm; but, I doubt if any one else among us ever was warm for five minutes together; and the shivering, and the chattering of teeth, were sad to hear. The child cried a little at first for her lost playfellow, The Golden Mary; but hardly ever whimpered afterwards; and when the state of the weather made it possible, she used now and then to be held up in the arms of some of us, to look over the sea for John Steadiman's boat. I see the golden hair and the innocent face now, between me and the driving clouds, like an Angel going to fly away.

It had happened on the second day, towards night, that Mrs. Atherfield, in getting Little Lucy to sleep, sang her a song. She had a soft, melodious voice, and, when she had finished it, our people up and begged for another. She sang them another, and after it had fallen dark ended with the Evening Hymn. From that time, whenever anything could be heard above the sea and wind, and while she had any voice left, nothing would serve the people but that she should sing at sunset. She always did, and always ended with the Evening Hymn. We mostly took up the last line, and shed tears when it was done, but not miserably. We had a prayer night and morning, also, when the weather allowed of it.

Twelve nights and eleven days we had been driving in the boat, when old Mr. Rarr began to be delirious, and to cry out to me to throw the gold overboard or it would sink us, and we should all be lost. For days past the child had been declining, and that was the great cause of his wildness. He had been over and over again shrieking out to me to give her all the remaining meat, to give her all the remaining rum, to save her at any cost, or we should all be ruined. At this time, she lay in her mother's arms at my feet. One of her little hands was almost always creeping about her mother's neck or chin. I had watched the wasting of the little hand, and I knew it was nearly over.

The old man's cries were so discordant with the mother's love and submission, that I called out to him in an angry voice, unless he held his peace on the instant, I would order him to be knocked on the head and thrown overboard. He was mute then, until the child died, very peacefully, an hour afterwards: which was known to all in the boat by the mother's breaking out into lamentations

for the first time since the wreck—for, she had great fortitude and constancy, though she was a little gentle woman. Old Mr. Rarr then became quite ungovernable, tearing what rags he had on him, raging in imprecations, and calling to me that if I had thrown the gold overboard (always the gold with him!) I might have saved the child, "And now," says he, in a terrible voice, "we shall founder, and all go to the Devil, for our sins will sink us, when we have no innocent child to bear us up!" We so discovered with amazement, that this old wretch had only cared for the life of the pretty little creature dear to all of us, because of the influence he superstitiously hoped she might have in preserving him! Altogether it was too much for the smith or armourer, who was sitting next the old man, to bear. He took him by the throat and rolled him under the thwarts, where he lay still enough for hours afterwards.

All that thirteenth night, Miss Coleshaw, lying across my knees as I kept the helm, comforted and supported the poor mother. Her child, covered with a pea-jacket of mine, lay in her lap. It troubled me all night to think that there was no Prayer-Book among us, and that I could remember but very few of the exact words of the burial service. When I stood up at broad day, all knew what was going to be done, and I noticed that my poor fellows made the motion of uncovering their heads, though their heads had been stark bare to the sky and sea for many a weary hour. There was a long heavy swell on, but otherwise it was a fair morning, and there were broad fields of sunlight on the waves in the east. I said no more than this, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. He raised the daughter of Jairus the ruler, and said she was not dead, but slept. He raised the widow's son. He arose himself, and was seen of many. He loved little children, saying Suffer them to come unto me and rebuke them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. In His name, my friends, and committed to His merciful goodness!" With those words I laid my rough face softly on the placid little forehead, and buried the Golden Lucy in the grave of the Golden Mary.*

Having had it on my mind to relate the end of this dear little child, I have omitted something from its exact place, which I will supply here. It will come quite as well here as anywhere else.

Foreseeing that if the boat lived through the stormy weather, the time must come, and soon come, when we should have absolutely no morsel to eat, I had one momentous point often in my thoughts. Although I had, years before that, fully satisfied myself that the instances in which human beings in the last distress have fed upon each other, are exceedingly few, and have very seldom indeed (if ever) occurred when the people in distress,

however dreadful their extremity, have been accustomed to moderate forbearance and restraint—I say, though I had, long before, quite satisfied my mind on this topic, I felt doubtful whether there might not have been in former cases some harm and danger from keeping it out of sight and pretending not to think of it. I felt doubtful whether some minds, growing weak with fasting and exposure, and having such a terrific idea to dwell upon in secret, might not magnify it until it got to have an awful attraction about it. This was not a new thought of mine, for it had grown out of my reading. However, it came over me stronger than it had ever done before—as it had reason for doing—in the boat, and on the fourth day I decided that I would bring out into the light that unformed fear which must have been more or less darkly in every brain among us. Therefore, as a means of beguiling the time and inspiring hope, I gave them the best summary in my power of Bligh's voyage of more than three thousand miles, in an open boat, after the Mutiny of the Bounty, and of the wonderful preservation of that boat's crew. They listened throughout with great interest, and I concluded by telling them, that, in my opinion, the happiest circumstance in the whole narrative was, that Bligh, who was no delicate man either, had solemnly placed it on record therein that he was sure and certain that under no conceivable circumstances whatever, would that emaciated party who had gone through all the pains of famine, have preyed on one another. I cannot describe the visible relief which this spread through the boat, and how the tears stood in every eye. From that time I was as well convinced as Bligh himself that there was no danger, and that this phantom, at any rate, did not haunt us.

Now, it was a part of Bligh's experience that when the people in his boat were most cast down, nothing did them so much good as hearing a story told by one of their number. When I mentioned that, I saw that it struck the general attention as much as it did my own, for I had not thought of it until I came to it in my summary. This was on the day after Mrs. Atherfield first sang to us. I proposed that whenever the weather would permit we should have a story two hours after dinner (I always issued the allowance I have mentioned, at one o'clock and called it by that name), as well as our song at sunset. The proposal was received with a cheerful satisfaction that warmed my heart within me; and I do not say too much when I say that those two periods in the four-and-twenty hours were expected with positive pleasure, and were really enjoyed, by all hands. Spectres as we soon were in our bodily wasting, our imaginations did not perish like the gross flesh upon our bones. Music and Adventure, two of the great gifts of Provi-

denice to mankind, could charm us long after that was lost.

The wind was almost always against us after the second day; and for many days together we could not nearly hold our own. We had all varieties of bad weather. We had rain, hail, snow, wind, mist, thunder and lightning. Still the boats lived through the heavy seas, and still we perishing people rose and fell with the great waves.

Sixteen nights and fifteen days, twenty nights and nineteen days, twenty-four nights and twenty-three days. So the time went on. Disheartening as I knew that our progress, or want of progress, must be, I never deceived them as to my calculations of it. In the first place, I felt that we were all too near eternity for deceit; in the second place, I knew that if I failed, or died, the man who followed me must have a knowledge of the true state of things to begin upon. When I told them at noon, what I reckoned we had made or lost, they generally received what I said, in a tranquil and resigned manner, and always gratefully towards me. It was not unusual at any time of the day for some one to burst out weeping loudly without any new cause, and, when the burst was over, to calm down a little better than before. I had seen exactly the same thing in a house of mourning.

During the whole of this time, old Mr. Rarx had had his fits of calling out to me to throw the gold (always the gold!) overboard, and of heaping violent reproaches upon me for not having saved the child; but, now, the food being all gone, and I having nothing left to serve out but a bit of coffee-berry now and then, he began to be too weak to do this, and consequently fell silent. Mrs. Atherfield and Miss Coleshaw generally lay, each with an arm across one of my knees, and her head upon it. They never complained at all. Up to the time of her child's death, Mrs. Atherfield had bound up her own beautiful hair every day; and I took particular notice that this was always before she sang her song at night, when every one looked at her. But, she never did it after the loss of her darling; and it would have been now all tangled with dirt and wet, but that Miss Coleshaw was careful of it long after she was herself, and would sometimes smooth it down with her weak thin hands.

We were past mustering a story now; but, one day, at about this period, I reverted to the superstition of old Mr. Rarx, concerning the Golden Lucy, and told them that nothing vanished from the eye of God, though much might pass away from the eyes of men. "We were all of us," says I, "children once; and our baby feet have strolled in green woods ashore; and our baby hands have gathered flowers in gardens, where the birds were singing. The children that we were, are not lost to the great knowledge of our Creator. Those innocent creatures will

appear with us before Him, and plead for us. What we were in the best time of our generous youth will arise and go with us too. The purest part of our lives will not desert us at the pass to which all of us here present are gliding. What we were then, will be as much in existence before Him, as what we are now." They were no less comforted by this consideration, than I was myself; and Miss Coleshaw, drawing my ear nearer to her lips, said, "Captain Ravender, I was on my way to marry a disgraced and broken man, whom I dearly loved when he was honorable and good. Your words seem to have come out of my own poor heart." She pressed my hand upon it, smiling.

Twenty-seven nights and twenty-six days. We were in no want of rain-water, but we had nothing else. And yet, even now, I never turned my eyes upon a waking face but it tried to brighten before mine. O! what a thing it is, in a time of danger, and in the presence of death, the shining of a face upon a face! I have heard it broached that orders should be given in great new ships by electric telegraph. I admire machinery as much as any man, and am as thankful to it as any man can be for what it does for us. But, it will never be a substitute for the face of a man, with his soul in it, encouraging another man to be brave and true. Never try it for that. It will break down like a straw.

I now began to remark certain changes in myself which I did not like. They caused me much disquiet. I often saw the Golden Lucy in the air above the boat. I often saw her I have spoken of before, sitting beside me. I saw the Golden Mary go down as she really had gone down, twenty times in a day. And yet the sea was mostly, to my thinking, not sea neither, but moving country and extraordinary mountainous regions, the like of which have never been beheld. I felt it time to leave my last words regarding John Steadiman, in case any lips should last out to repeat them to any living ears. I said that John had told me (as he had on deck) that he had sung out "Breakers ahead!" the instant they were audible, and had tried to wear ship, but she struck before it could be done. (His cry, I dare say, had made my dream.) I said that the circumstances were altogether without warning and out of any course that could have been guarded against; that the same loss would have happened if I had been in charge; and that John was not to blame, but from first to last had done his duty nobly, like the man he was. I tried to write it down in my pocket-book, but could make no words, though I knew what the words were that I wanted to make. When it had come to that, her hands—though she was dead so long—laid me down gently in the bottom of the boat, and she and the Golden Lucy swung me to sleep.

All that follows, was written by John Steadiman, Chief Mate :

On the twenty-sixth day after the foundering of the *Golden Mary* at sea, I, John Steadiman, was sitting in my place in the stern-sheets of the Surf-boat, with just sense enough left in me to steer—that is to say, with my eyes strained, wide-awake, over the bows of the boat, and my brains fast asleep and dreaming—when I was roused upon a sudden by our second mate, Mr. William Rames.

"Let me take a spell in your place," says he. "And look you out for the Long-boat, astern. The last time she rose on the crest of a wave, I thought I made out a signal flying aboard her."

We shifted our places, clumsily and slowly enough, for we were both of us weak and dazed with wet, cold, and hunger. I waited some time, watching the heavy rollers astern, before the Long-boat rose a-top of one of them at the same time with us. At last, she was heaved up for a moment well in view, and there, sure enough, was the signal flying aboard of her—a ~~strip~~ of rag of some sort, rigged to an oar, and hoisted in her bows.

"What does it mean?" says Rames to me in a quivering, trembling sort of voice. "Do they signal a sail in sight?"

"Hush, for God's sake!" says I, clapping my hand over his mouth. "Don't let the people hear you. They'll all go mad together if we mislead them about that signal. Wait a bit, till I have another look at it."

I held on by him, for he had set me all of a tremble with his notion of a sail in sight, and watched for the Long-boat again. Up she rose on the top of another roller. I made out the signal clearly, that second time, and saw that it was rigged half-mast high.

"Rames," says I, "it's a signal of distress. Pass the word forward to keep her before the sea, and no more. We must get the Long-boat within hailing distance of us, as soon as possible."

I dropped down into my old place at the tiller without another word—for the thought went through me like a knife that something had happened to Captain Ravender. I should consider myself unworthy to write another line of this statement, if I had not made up my mind to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—and I must, therefore, confess plainly that now, for the first time, my heart sank within me. This weakness on my part was produced in some degree, as I take it, by the exhausting effects of previous anxiety and grief.

Our provisions—if I may give that name to what we had left—were reduced to the rind of one lemon and about a couple of handfuls of coffee-berries. Besides these great distresses, caused by the death, the danger, and the suffering among my crew and passengers, I had had a little distress of my own to shake me still more, in the death

of the child whom I had got to be very fond of on the voyage out—so fond that I was secretly a little jealous of her being taken in the Long-boat instead of mine when the ship foundered. It used to be a great comfort to me, and I think to those with me also, after we had seen the last of the *Golden Mary*, to see the *Golden Lucy*, held up by the men in the Long-boat, when the weather allowed it, as the best and brightest sight they had to show. She looked, at the distance we saw her from, almost like a little white bird in the air. To miss her for the first time, when the weather lulled a little again, and we all looked out for our white bird and looked in vain, was a sore disappointment. To see the men's heads bowed down and the captain's hand pointing into the sea when we hailed the Long-boat, a few days after, gave me as heavy a shock and as sharp a pang of heartache to bear as ever I remember suffering in all my life. I only mention these things to show that if I did give way a little at first, under the dread that our captain was lost to us, it was not without having been a good deal shaken beforehand by more trials of one sort or another than often fall to one man's share.

I had got over the choking in my throat with the help of a drop of water, and had steadied my mind again so as to be prepared against the worst, when I heard the hail (Lord help the poor fellows, how weak it sounded!)—

"Surf-boat, ahoy!"

I looked up, and there were our companions in misfortune toasting abreast of us; not so near that we could make out the features of any of them, but near enough, with some exertion for people in our condition, to make their voices heard in the intervals when the wind was weakest.

I answered the hail, and waited a bit, and heard nothing, and then sung out the captain's name. The voice that replied did not sound like his; the words that reached us were:

"Chief-mate wanted on board!"

Every man of my crew knew what that meant as well as I did. As second officer in command, there could be but one reason for wanting me on board the Long-boat. A groan went all round us, and my men looked darkly in each other's faces, and whispered under their breaths:

"The captain is dead!"

I commanded them to be silent, and not to make too sure of bad news, at such a pass as things had now come to with us. Then, hailing the Long-boat, I signified that I was ready to go on board when the weather would let me—stopped a bit to draw a good long breath—and then called out as loud as I could the dreadful question—

"Is the captain dead?"

The black figures of three or four men in

the after-part of the Long-boat all stooped down together as my voice reached them. They were lost to view for about a minute; then appeared again—one man among them was held up on his feet by the rest, and he hailed back the blessed words (a very faint hope went a very long way with people in our desperate situation):

"Not yet!"

The relief felt by me, and by all with me, when we knew that our captain, though unfitted for duty, was not lost to us, it is not in words—at least, not in such words as a man like me can command—to express. I did my best to cheer the men by telling them what a good sign it was that we were not as badly off yet as we had feared; and then communicated what instructions I had to give, to William Rames, who was to be left in command in my place when I took charge of the Long-boat. After that, there was nothing to be done, but to wait for the chance of the wind dropping at sunset, and the sea going down afterwards, so as to enable our weak crews to lay the two boats alongside of each other, without undue risk—or, to put it plainer, without saddling ourselves with the necessity for any extraordinary exertion of strength or skill. Both the one and the other had now been starved out of us for days and days together.

At sunset the wind suddenly dropped, but the sea, which had been running high for so long a time past, took hours after that before it showed any signs of getting to rest. The moon was shining, the sky was wonderfully clear, and it could not have been, according to my calculations, far off midnight, when the long, slow, regular swell of the calming ocean fairly set in, and I took the responsibility of lessening the distance between the Long-boat and ourselves.

It was, I dare say, a delusion of mine; but I thought I had never seen the moon shine so white and ghastly anywhere, either at sea or on land, as she shone that night while we were approaching our companions in misery. When there was not much more than a boat's length between us, and the white light streamed cold and clear over all our faces, both crews rested on their oars with one great shudder, and stared over the gunwale of either boat, panic-stricken at the first sight of each other.

"Any lives lost among you?" I asked, in the midst of that frightful silence.

The men in the Long-boat huddled together like sheep at the sound of my voice.

"None yet, but the child, thanks be to God!" answered one among them.

And at the sound of his voice, all my men shrank together like the men in the Long-boat. I was afraid to let the horror produced by our first meeting at close quarters after the dreadful changes that wet, cold, and famine had produced, last one moment longer than could be helped; so, without giving time for

any more questions and answers, I commanded the men to lay the two boats close alongside of each other. When I rose up and committed the tiller to the hands of Rames, all my poor fellows raised their white faces imploringly to mine. "Don't leave us, sir," they said, "don't leave us." "I leave you," says I, "under the command and the guidance of Mr. William Rames, as good a sailor as I am, and as trusty and kind a man as ever stepped. Do your duty by him, as you have done it by me; and, remember, to the last, that while there is life there is hope. God bless and help you all!" With those words, I collected what strength I had left, caught at two arms that were held out to me, and so got from the stern-sheets of one boat into the stern-sheets of the other.

"Mind where you step, sir," whispered one of the men who had helped me into the Long-boat. I looked down as he spoke. Three figures were huddled up below me, with the moonshine falling on them in ragged streaks through the gaps between the men standing or sitting above them. The first face I made out was the face of Miss Coleshaw, her eyes were wide open, and fixed on me. She seemed still to keep her senses, and, by the alternate parting and closing of her lips, to be trying to speak, but I could not hear that she uttered a single word. On her shoulder rested the head of Mrs. Atherfield. The mother of our poor little Golden Lucy must, I think, have been dreaming of the child she had lost; for there was a faint smile just ruffling the white stillness of her face, when I first saw it turned upward, with peaceful closed eyes towards the heavens. From her I looked down a little, and there, with his head on her lap, and with one of her hands resting tenderly on his cheek—there lay the Captain, to whose help and guidance, up to this miserable time, we had never looked in vain,—there, worn out at last in our service, and for our sakes, lay the best and bravest man of all our company. I stole my hand in gently through his clothes and laid it on his heart, and felt a little feeble warmth over it, though my cold, dulled, touch could not detect even the faintest beating. The two men in the stern-sheets with me, noticing what I was doing,—knowing I loved him like a brother—and seeing, I suppose, more distress in my face than I myself was conscious of its showing, lost command over themselves altogether, and burst into a piteous moaning, sobbing lamentation over him. One of the two drew aside a jacket from his feet, and showed me that they were bare, except where a wet, ragged strip of stocking still clung to one of them. When the ship struck the iceberg, he had run on deck, leaving his shoes in his cabin. All through the voyage in the boat his feet had been unprotected; and not a soul had discovered it until he dropped! As long as he could keep his eyes open, the

very look of them had cheered the men, and comforted and upheld the women. Not one living creature in the boat, with any sense about him, but had felt the good influence of that brave man in one way or another. Not one but had heard him, over and over again, give the credit to others which was due only to himself; praising this man for patience, and thanking that man for help, when the patience and the help had really and truly, as to the best part of both, come only from him. All this, and much more, I heard pouring confusedly from the men's lips while they crouched down, sobbing and crying over their commander, and wrapping the jacket as warmly and tenderly as they could over his cold feet. It went to my heart to check them; but I knew that if this lamenting spirit spread any further, all chance of keeping alight any last sparks of hope and resolution among the boat's company would be lost for ever. Accordingly I sent them to their places, spoke a few encouraging words to the men forward, promising to serve out, when the morning came, as much as I dared of any eatable thing left in the lockers; called to Rames, in my old boat, to keep as near us as he safely could; drew the garments and coverings of the two poor suffering women more closely about them; and, with a secret prayer to be directed for the best in bearing the awful responsibility now laid on my shoulders, took my Captain's vacant place at the helm of the Long-boat.

This, as well as I can tell it, is the full and true account of how I came to be placed in charge of the lost passengers and crew of The Golden Mary, on the morning of the twenty-seventh day after the ship struck the iceberg, and foundered at sea.

Before I go on to relate what happened after the two boats were under my command, I will stop a little here, for the purpose of adding some pages of writing to the present narrative, without which it would not be, in my humble estimation, complete. I allude to some little record of the means by which—before famine and suffering dulled our ears and silenced our tongues—we shortened the weary hours, and helped each other to forget, for a while, the dangers that encompassed us. The stories to which Captain Ravender has referred, as having been related by the people in his boat, were matched by other stories, related by the people in my boat; and, in both cases, as I well know, the good effect of our following, in this matter, the example of Bligh and his men, when they were adrift like us, was of unspeakable importance in keeping up our spirits, and, by consequence, in giving us the courage which was necessary, under Providence, to the preservation of our lives. I shall therefore ask permission, before proceeding to the account of our Deliverance, to reproduce in this place three or four of the most noteworthy of the stories which circulated among us. Some, I give from my remembrance; some, which I did not hear, from the remembrance of others.

THE BEGUELEMENT IN THE BOATS.

I come from Ashbrooke. (It was the Armourer who spun this yarn.) Dear me! how many years back is that? Twenty years ago it must be now—long before I ever thought of going to sea—before I let rambling notions get into my head—when I used to walk up the street singing, and thinking of the time when I should come to have a forge of my own.

It was a pretty sight to look down Ashbrooke, especially on a fine summer's day, when the sun was out. Why, I've been told painters would come from miles off, purposely to put it down on paper, and you'd see them at turnings of the road, and under trees working away like bees. And no wonder, for I have seen pictures enough in my day, but none to go near that. I've often wished I could handle a brush like some of those people—just enough, you know, to make a little picture of it for myself, to bring about with me, and hang up over my hammock. For that matter, I am looking at it this moment, standing, as it might be, at the corner of the road, looking down the slope. There was the old church, just here on the

right, with a slanting roof running to the ground, almost. You might walk round it for a month and not see a bare stone, the moss grew so thick all over it. It was very pleasant of Sundays, standing by and seeing the village folk trooping out of the porch, and hearing the organ-music playing away inside! Then, going down the hill, a little further on, you met queer, old-fashioned houses, with great shingle roofs. Beyond that, again, was a puzzling bit of building, like the half of a church-window, standing up quite stiff by itself. They used to say there had once been an abbey or nunnery in these parts, full of clergymen and clergymen, in the old papist times, of course; and there were little bits of it sticking up all over the place. Then more old houses (How the moss did grow, to be sure!), until you passed by the Joyful Heart Inn, where every traveller pulled up to refresh himself and his nag. Many is the pleasant hour I've spent in the Joyful Heart, sitting in the cool porch with the ivy hanging down overhead, or by the great fireplace in the sanded kitchen.

There was a sort of open place in front of the Joyful Heart, with a market-cross in the middle, and a spring where the young women used to come for water, and stand talking there, telling each other the news. The painters used to put them down too—spring and all; and I don't wonder at their fancying them. For, when I was sitting that way in the porch, looking out at them, the red petticoats, and the queer jars, and the old cross, and the sun going down behind, made a kind of picture very pretty to look at. I've seen the same of it many a time in some of those places about the Spanish main, when the foreign women stood round about and carried their jars in the same fashion. Only there was no Joyful Heart. I always missed the Joyful Heart in such places. Neither was there the Great Forge just over the way, facing the Joyful Heart. I must put in a word here about the Forge, though I have been a long time coming round to the point.

I never saw such a forge as that—never! It must have been another bit of the old Abbey—the great gate, most likely, for it was nothing but a huge, wide, archway. Very handsomely worked, though; and covered with moss like the rest. There was a little stone hutch at the top, that looked like a belfry. The bell was gone long ago, of course, but the rings were there, and the stauncheons, all soundly made—good work as I could have turned out myself. Some one had run up a bit of building at the back, which kept out the wind and made all snug, and there you had as handsome a forge as I ever came across.

It was kept by a young man of the name of Whichelo—Will Whichelo. But he had another name besides that, and I think a better one. If you were to go asking through the village for one Will Whichelo, why, you would come back about as wise as you went; unless, indeed, you chanced upon the minister or the schoolmaster. No; but because he was always seen hard at his work, swinging his hammer with good will, and stepping back at every stroke to get a better sweep—because he laid his whole soul to the business—the Ashbrooke folk christened him Ding Dong Will. He was always singing, and at his work. Many a nice young woman of the village would have been glad if Ding Dong Will had looked her way. But he never took heed of any of them, or was more than civil and gentle with them.

"Look ye," he would say, leaning on his great hammer, "are they the creatures for handling cold iron, or lifting the sledge? No, no!" and would take up his favourite stave of Hammer and anvil! hammer and anvil! lads, yoho!

I was but a youngster at that time, but had a great hankering after the iron business. I would be nothing else, I told my father, who wanted to send me up to London to learn

accounts. I was always dropping down there, and would stay half the day, leaning against the arch and watching the forging. Coming along of a night, I used to get quite cheerful when I saw the blaze of the furnace, and the chinking of the iron was the finest music for me I ever heard—finer than the organ tunes even. Sometimes a dusty rider would come galloping in, and pull up sharp at the Forge; he had cast a shoe on the road, and Ding Dong Will would come out and take the horse's measure. Then the village folk would get standing round, in twos and threes, all of them eyeing over the horse and the rider, too. Then he would get upon his nag once more, and the little crowd would open, and he ride away harder than he came, Ding Dong Will, with his hammer over his shoulder, looking after him till he got to the turn of the hill.

At last, my father came round and gave up making me a clerk—it would never have done—and Ding Dong Will, who had a liking for me, agreed to take me at the Forge. I soon got to use the big sledge fairly enough—nothing, of course, as Ding Dong Will; and so we worked away from morning till night, like two Jolly Millers. There was fine music at the Forge, when the two of us were at it.

Ding Dong Will never went to the Joyful Heart; he said he had no time to be idle; but I went pretty often—that is, when the day was done and work over—just to have a talk in the cool porch, and hear what company was in the house. For, Miss Arthur—Mary Arthur—she that used to sit in the parlour and manage the house, was never very stand-off to me. But she had a reason of her own for that, as you will see. She was niece to old Joe Fenton, the landlord, who brought her down from London to keep things going. In short, she was as good as mistress there. Folks said she kept her head a little high; but, to say truth, I never found her so. She had had her schooling up in London, and had learned manners with the best of them, so it was but nature she should be a stroke above the girls of the place. That was why they didn't like her. About her looks? Ah! she was a beauty! Such hair—it went nigh down to her feet—and her eyes—why they shot fire like a pair of stars—and she had a way of shifting them back and forward, and taking your measure at every look, that made you feel quite uneasy. All the young fellows were by the ears about her, but she never heeded or encouraged them; unless it might be that she had a leaning to one—and that was to Ding Dong Will opposite. No one thought of such a thing, she kept it so close; but she might as well have had a leaning to a lump of cold iron.

The way I came to suspect it was this. The old Forge, as I said, was just fronting the Joyful Heart; and, every morning, as sure

as I came down to work, I used to see her sitting in the bow-window, behind the white curtain, working with her needle. There she would be all the morning, for at that time there was nothing doing down-stairs, and, every now and again, she would be taking a shy look over at the Forge where Ding Dong Will was swinging his great sledge, and trolling his Hammer and anvil! lads, yoho! He was well worth looking out at, was Ding Dong Will. I used to tell him, "Mary Arthur is making eyes at you yonder—have a care, Will." And he would laugh loud, and say, "She may find better sport elsewhere. No sweethearts for me, lad. Hand the file. Sing Hammer and anvil, yoho!"

I never saw so insensible a fellow, never. But her liking slipped out in more ways than that. Whenever I went in, she was always taking notice of me, and asking about myself. How was I getting on at the Forge? Did I like the business? Did we do much? What kind was he, the other—he with the curious name? Then she would laugh, and show her white teeth.

At last, one Saturday evening I was sitting in the porch, looking at the children playing in the road, when I heard a step at the back, and there was Mary Arthur standing behind me. "Resting after the week?" she said.

"Yes, and a hard week we've had of it."

"Nothing doing at the Forge now, I suppose," says she. (He had gone down to the green with the young fellows to throw the bar.)

"No," says I; "we've let the fire out, and will rest till Monday."

She stayed silent for a minute, and then—"Why does he—Whichelo I mean—keep shut up that way at home?" She was beating her hands impatiently together. "What does it all mean? What do you make of it?"

I stared, you may be sure, she spoke so sharply.

"Does he never go out and see the world—go to dances or merry-makings?"

"No," said I; "never."

"Well," said she, "isn't it odd; how do you account for it?"

"Well, it is odd," I said.

"And he so young?"

All this while she was shifting her black eyes in a restless kind of way.

"You should try," says she, "and get him to mix more with the others, for your own sake as well as his."

I was going to tell her I was at him morning, noon, and night, when the bell rang, and she tripped off.

Ding Dong Will came into the Forge that night, fairly tired and done up. "Beat them as usual!" he said, as he flung himself down on the bench.

"I knew you would," I said.

"But it was thirsty work: some drink, for Heaven's sake!"

"There's not a drop of malt in the house," I said.

"Well, go over and fetch some."

Said I, "Go yourself. I tell you what, there's a nice girl there always talking of you; and, if you've anything of a man about you, you'll go over and speak her softly, and show her you're not what she takes you for. Now, there's my mind for you, Ding Dong Will."

"Stuff," says he, laughing; "let her mind her own business, and leave me to my anvil. I'll not go."

"Ah! you're afraid," said I—"that's it!"

"Afraid," says he, starting up; "you know I'm not—you know I'm not. Here, I'll go," and made straight for the door. "Stop," he said, turning round, "what did she say about taking me for a different sort of man?"

"No matter now," said I. "When you come back."

It should have been a five minutes' job, that fetching the malt. But, would you believe it? he was close upon an hour about it. I knew well she had not been losing her time. When he came in, I began at once at him: "Ah, ah!" said I, "didn't I tell you? I knew it!"

"Nonsense," said he, with a foolish kind of laugh, "it was none of my fault. She kept me there with her talk, and I couldn't get away."

"O, poor Ding Dong Will," I said, "You had better have stayed away, after all!"

"Folly!" says he, laughing more foolishly still; "you'll see if she gets me there again. Enough about her. There!"

I saw he was uneasy in his mind, and so gave him no more trouble. But I needn't have been so delicate with him at all, for next day it was quite the other way. He never gave me peace or rest, sounding me and picking out of me what she had said of him. The man was clean gone from that hour. It's always the way with those kind of men: when they are touched, they run off like a bit of melted metal.

He got worse every day from that out. He was in and out of the Joyful Heart half his time, always on some excuse or other, and going lazily to his work, stopping every now and again to have a look at the white curtain over the way. It was a poor thing to see him—it was indeed; I was ashamed of him. At last he came to doing nothing at all, or next to nothing; and the great hammer was laid by in a corner.

Well, this went on, it might be for a month, and folks in the village began to talk and wink, and say, what would come next, now that Ding Dong Will was caught at last. I tried to keep things going as well as I could, but it was of very little use. The business fell off; and I never will forget the sinking feel I got when the riders began to go straight on through the village—past the old Forge—

and pull up at a new place, lately opened, beyond the church! After all they only did what was natural, and went where they would be best attended to. By-and-by I saw a change coming on Ding Dong Will—a very odd change. With all his foolishness, he had been in great spirits—always laughing—without much meaning to be sure; but, still as I say, in great spirits. But now, I saw that he was turning quite another way, getting quite a down-hearted, moping kind of manner, I couldn't well make out. He would come in of an evening—very rough and sulky—and sit down before the fire looking into the coals, and never open his mouth for hours at a time. Then he would get up and walk up and down, stamping and muttering—nothing very holy, you may be sure. I soon guessed—indeed, I heard as much in the village—that she was drawing off a bit—or else trying her play-acting upon him, for she was full of those kind of tricks. She was a very deep one, that Mary Arthur, and it was a pity she ever came into the place. She had a kind of up-and-down way of treating him—one time being all smiles and pleasantness, and next day like a lump of ice,—pretending not to see him when he came in. She made him know his place—rolling her black eyes back and forward in every direction but his; then he would come home raging and swearing. I often wondered what she could be at, or what was at the bottom of it all; and, I believe, I would never have come at the truth if I didn't happen one day to run up against a handsome-looking gentleman in a fisherman's hat, just at the door of the Joyful Heart. They told me, inside, it was young Mr. Temple, of Temple Court,—some ten miles off,—come down to stop there for the fishing.

There it was! That was the secret of all! He had been there nigh on a fortnight—had come, mind you, for two or three days' fishing; but the sport was so good he really must stay a bit longer. Quite natural—and, you may say, quite proper! I'm thinking there was better sport going on in the parlour than ever he found in the river. Her head was nigh turned with it all, and I really believe she thought she was going to be Mistress of Temple Court before long—though how a young girl that had come down to London, and had seen a bit of life, should be so short-seeing, is more than I can fancy. She took the notion into her head—that was certain—and every soul in the place could see what she was at, except the poor blind creature at the Forge; but even he had his eyes opened at last, for people now began to talk and whisper, and hope all was right up at the Joyful Heart. I heard that the minister had gone once to speak with her, but came out very red and angry. No doubt she had bidden him mind his own concerns, and not meddle with her. As to old Joe Fenton's looking

after his niece, he might as well have been out of a block of wood.

One morning, just after breakfast, when he—Ding Dong Will—was sitting at the fire as usual, and not speaking a word, he turns round quite sharp upon me and says:

"What is that young Jack doing all this time? What do you say?"

"I'm sure I can't tell," I said, "unless it be fishing."

"Fishing!" said he, stamping down the coals with his great shoe, "like enough! I've never heard much of the fish in these waters."

"Still he does go out with a rod," I said; "there's nothing else here to amuse him, I suppose. But he goes on Monday."

"Look me in the face," says he, catching me by the wrist, "you don't believe that he's come only for that?"

"I can't tell," said I, "unless it is that he likes Mary Arthur's company. She's a nice girl!"

"Ah!" said he, "I've been thinking so some time back—the false, hollow jade! This was at the bottom of all her tricks! But I tell you what," said he, snatching his hammer, "let him look out, and not come in my way—I give him warning—"

With this he got a bit of iron upon the anvil and beat away at it like a wild man. Then he flung it down into a corner and, taking his hat, walked out with great strides. I ran after him and took him by the arm, for I was in a desperate fright lest he should do something wicked. But he put me back quietly.

"See," said he, "I give you a caution, don't meddle with me. Mind—"

I didn't try and stop him then, for he looked savage. But I followed a little behind. He made for the Joyful Heart; and, just as he came under the porch, with his head down, and never heeding where he was going to, he ran full up against somebody, who, without much more ado, gave him back his own, and flung him right against the wall.

"Now then, young Hercules!" said a gay kind of voice—I knew it for Mr. Temple's,— "now then, look before you, will you! Keep the passage clear."

I thought the other was going to run at him straight, but he stopped himself quickly.

"Who are you speaking to in that way?" said he, with a low kind of growl. "Is it your horse, or your dog, or your groom? Which? Are those manners?"

"Now, Bruin," says the young man, "no words. Let me pass,—I'm in a hurry."

"Who was it taught you," says Ding Dong Will, with the same kind of growl, and not moving an inch,— "who taught you to call folk Bruins and Herculeses—eh? I declare," says he, colouring up quite red, and trembling all over, "I've a mind to give you a lesson myself—I will, by —"

I think he was going to spring at him this time, but I heard steps on the sanded floor,

and there was Mary Arthur standing before us. A fine creature she looked, too. She was in a tearing rage—and her eyes had more of the devilish look in them than I had ever seen before.

"For shame," she said, to Will—"for shame! What do you come here for, with your low brawling ways. Who asks you to come? Who wants you? Take him away—home—anywhere out of this!"

It was a piteous sight to look at poor Ding Dong Will, staring stupidly at her, and breathing hard, as if there was a weight on his chest.

"Mr. Temple," says she, turning to him quite changed, and with a gentle smile on her face, "can you forgive me for all this? That such a thing should have happened to you in our house! But it shall never occur again! Never—never!"

I could see he took her very easy, for he was looking out at something, and she had to say it twice over before he heard her.

"Sweet Mary," said he, "don't give yourself a moment's uneasiness about me. Let things go as they may, that you don't put yourself out." Here he gave a kind of yawn, and went over to the window.

• She looked after him, biting her lip hard.

"Why don't you take him away, as I told you?" she says at last. "What does he want here?"

I pitied him so much; to see him standing there so beaten down, that I could not help putting in my word.

"Well, I must say, Miss Mary, poor Ding Dong Will didn't deserve this,—from you, of all people."

"Hallo!" says Mr. Temple, coming back; "is this famous Ding Dong Will from over the way?"

"No other, sir," says I.

"Here, Ding Dong Will," says he, putting out his hand, "we musn't fall out. If I had known it was you, you should have had the passage all to yourself. You're a fine fellow, Will, and I've often admired the way you swung the great hammer."

She was biting her lips still harder than before, but said nothing.

"Stop," said he, "I have a great idea. So this is Ding Dong Will! Whisper a minute, Mary."

He did whisper something to her, and you never saw what a change it made in her. She turned all scarlet, and gave him such a wicked devilish look.

"This is some joke," said she, at last.

"Not a bit of it," says he, laughing; "not a bit of it. Ah! You see I know what goes on in the village!"

"I couldn't believe that you mean such a thing!" says she, getting white again.

"Stuff!" said he, very impatiently. "I tell you, I am in earnest. Listen, Ding Dong Will. I must be off to London to-morrow,—the ladies there are dying to see me, so go

I must. Now, I know there has been something on between you two,—don't tell me, I know all about it. So now, friend Ding Dong, show yourself a man of spirit, and settle it sharp. And I promise you, I'll come down myself to give the bride away, and start you both comfortably."

It was well for him he was looking the other way, and didn't see the infernal look she gave him out of those eyes of hers. I think if there had been a knife convenient, she would have plunged it into him at that minute. But she covered it all with a kind of forced laugh, and said she wasn't quite ready to be disposed of so quickly, and then made some excuse to run up-stairs. Mr. Temple then yawned again, and went over to the window, and wondered would it be a fine night, as he had to dine out. Neither of us spoke to him, for he was an unfeeling fellow with all his generous offers. So we left him there, and I brought back Ding Dong Will to the Forge again.

About four o'clock that same day (it was almost dark at that hour), when I was coming home from buying something in the village, I thought I saw him crossing over to the Joyful Heart; and as I passed the porch, I swear I saw the two of them (Mary Arthur and he) talking in the passage—there was no mistake about it—and she talking very eagerly. Presently, she drew him into the parlour, and shut the door. What could bring him there now, after the morning's business? Well, I thought, he is a poor-spirited creature, after all—a true spaniel! He didn't come in, I suppose for an hour after that, and then in a wild sort of humour, as if he had been drinking. But what do you think of his denying that he had been near the Joyful Heart at all, or that he had seen her? Denied it flat! And then, when I pressed him on it, and asked if I wasn't to trust my own eyes, he began to show his teeth, and get savage. I was only a youngster then, and so had to put up with his humours; but I determined to leave him on the first convenient excuse. Dear! how that man was changed in a short time!

On this night he took a fancy that we should go to bed early. He was tired, he said, and wanted rest after the day's trouble, and his heart was heavy. So I gave in to him at once, and we were soon snug in our little cots on each side of the hearth: we used to sleep of nights in a queer kind of place just off the forge, all vaulted over, with arches crossing one another and meeting, in a kind of carved bunch in the middle. This might have been the clergymen's pantry, or wine vaults, may be, in the old times. Whatever use they had for it, it was a very snug place. I recollect there were all sorts of queer faces with horns and hoods, all carved out in the bunch; and I often lay awake at nights looking at them, and studying them, and thinking why they were grinning and

winking at me in that way. I remember one creature that always aimed straight at you with his tail pointed, holding it like a gun.

It might have been about nine o'clock, or perhaps half-past eight, when we turned in. I know I heard the old church clock chiming pleasantly as we lay down. After watching the fire flashing up and down, and taking a look at the funny faces in the bunch overhead, I soon went sound asleep. I woke again, before the fire was out, and looking towards Will's cot, saw that it was empty. A vague feeling of uneasiness mingled with my surprise at that discovery, and made me jump out of bed in a moment. I reflected for a little—felt more uneasy than ever—huddled on my clothes in a great hurry—and, without giving myself a moment's time for any second thoughts, went out to see what had become of Ding Dong Will.

He was not in the neighbourhood of the Forge, so I followed a steep footpath in the wood behind which led straight to the water's edge. I walked on a little, observing that the moon was out and the stars shining, and the sky of a fine frosty blue, until I came to an old tree that I knew well. I had hardly cast a first careless look at it, before I started back all in a fright, for I saw at my feet, stretched out among the leaves, a figure with a fisherman's hat beside it. I knew it to be young Mr. Temple, lying there quite dead, with his face all over blood. I thought I should have sunk down upon the earth with grief and horror, and ran farther along the little pathway as fast as I could to a place where the trees opened a little, full in the moonlight. There, I saw Ding Dong Will standing quite still and motionless, with his hammer on his shoulder, and his face covered up in his hand.

He stayed a long time that way, without ever stirring, and then began to come up, very slowly, weeping, his eyes upon the ground. I felt as if I were fixed to that one spot, and waited till he met me full face to face. What a guilty start he gave!—I thought he would have dropped.

"O, Will, Will! what have you been doing? Some terrible thing!"

"I—I—I, nothing!" he said, staggering about, and hiding his face.

"What have you done with him—Mr. Temple?" I said, still holding him. He was trembling all over like a palsied man, and fell back against a tree with a deep groan. I saw how it was then—it was as good as written in his face. So I left him there—against the tree—and all the rest of that horrible night I wandered up and down along the roads and lanes; anything sooner than be under the same roof with him. At last morning came; and, as soon as the sun rose, I stole back, and, looking through the window, found that he was gone. I never like to think of that night, though it is so far back.

By noon the next day the whole town was

in a fever: people talking and whispering at corners. He had been missed; but they were on his track, for it was well known that he was away among the hills hiding. They dragged the river all day; and, on that night, the body of young Mr. Temple was found; his head beaten in with a hammer.

What end Will Whichelo came to, it would not be hard to guess. But Mary Arthur—she who drove him on to it, as everybody knew—she was let away, and went up to London, where she lived to do mischief enough. The old Forge was shut up, and fell into greater ruin. For many a long day no one ventured near that part of the river walk after dark.

It was the fifth evening towards twilight, when poor Dick began to sing—in my boat, the Surf-Boat. At first nobody took any notice of him, and indeed he seemed to be singing more to himself than to any one else. I had never heard the tune before, neither have I heard it since, but it was beautiful. I don't know how it might sound now, but then, in the twilight, darkness coming down on us fast, and, for aught we knew, death in the darkness, its simple words were full of meaning. The song was of a mother and child talking together of Heaven. I saw more than one gaunt face lifted up, and there was a great sob when it was done, as if everybody had held their breath to listen. Says Dick then, "That was my cousin Amy's song, Mr. Steadiman."

"Then it will be a favourite of yours, Dick;" I replied, hazarding a guess at the state of the case.

"Yes. I don't know why I sing it. Perhaps she put it in my mind. Do you believe in those things, Mr. Steadiman?"

"In what things, Dick?" I wanted to draw him on to talk of himself, as he had no other story to tell.

"She's dead, Captain; and it seemed a little while since as if I heard her voice, far away, as it might be in England, singing it again; and when she stopped, I took it up. It must be fancy, you know, it could not really be." Before long the night fell, and when we could not see each other's faces—except by the faint starlight—it seemed as if poor Dick's heart opened, and as if he must tell us who and what he was.

Perhaps I ought to say how poor Dick came to be with us at all. About a week before we sailed, there came to Captain Ravender one morning at his inn, a man whom he had known intimately; when they two were young fellows. Said he, "Captain, there's my nephew—poor Dick Tarrant—I want to ship him off to Australia, to California, or anywhere out of the way. He does nothing but get into mischief here, and bring disgrace on the family. Where are you bound for, next voyage?" Captain Ravender replied, "California. 'California is a long way off,' said

Captain Ravender's friend, "it will do as well as any place; he can dig for gold. The fact is, Dick has run through one fortune, and now a maiden-aunt, who considers the credit of the family, offers him three hundred pounds to leave England. He consents to go, and the best plan will be to put him under your charge, pay his passage and outfit, and leave the rest of the money in your hands to be given over to him when he lands at the diggings."

Captain Ravender agreed to the proposal, and poor Dick, who had been left standing outside the door, was called in and introduced. I came in just at that point, and saw him. He was the wreck of what had been a fine-looking young man, ten years ago, dragged down now by reckless dissipation to reckless poverty. His clothing was very shabby, his countenance wild and haggard, his shock of brown hair, rusty with neglect,—not a promising subject to look at. His uncle told him the arrangements he had made with Captain Ravender, in which he apparently acquiesced without much caring,—“North or south, east or west,” said he, “it was all the same to him. If he had gone out to India, when he had a chance a dozen years before, he should have been a man or a mouse then.” That was the only remark he offered. And the thing was settled.

But when the time came to sail, poor Dick was not forthcoming. We went up to his uncle's house to know what was to be done, and, by-and-by, down he came with his nephew, who had almost given us the slip. Until we got into blue water Dick was prisoner rather than passenger. He did not take to his banishment kindly, or see, as his relatives did, that there was a chance before him of redeeming a wasted life and repairing a ruined constitution. He was a very good-humoured, easy-tempered fellow, and a great favourite aboard; and, till the time of the wreck, cheerful, except in the evening when he got to leaning over the ship's-side, and singing all kinds of sentimental love-songs. I had told the men to keep an eye on him, and they did. I was afraid he might, in one of his black moods, try to make away with himself.

He was the younger of two brothers, sons of a yeoman or gentleman-farmer in Cheshire; both whose parents died when they were quite little things, leaving them, however, for their station, amply provided for. There was two hundred pounds a-year for their bringing-up, till they were eighteen, when the sum was to be doubled, and at one-and-twenty they were to get five thousand pounds a-piece to start them in the world. Old Miss Julian Tarrant took Tom, the elder, and my friend took poor Dick. Dick was a wild lad, idle at his book, banking after play, but as kind-hearted and handsome a fellow as you could wish to see. Dick was generally better liked than Tom, who was steady as old Time. Both brothers were sent to the grammar-school of the town, near

which they lived, and one of Dick's discursive anecdotes related to the second master there, whom, he asserted, he should have had pleasure in soundly thrashing at that moment, in part payment of the severe punishment he had formerly inflicted on his idle pupil. When Dick was sixteen that tide in his affairs came, which, had he followed it out to India, would probably have led on to fortune. But Dick had an invincible tie to England. Precocious in everything, he was deeply in love with his cousin Amy, who was three years older than himself, and very beautiful; and Amy was very fond of him as of a younger brother.

Said poor Dick, with a quiver in his voice, as he was telling his story, “She was the only creature in the whole world that ever really cared whether I lived or died. I worshipped the very ground she walked on! Tom was a clever, shrewd fellow—made for getting on in the world, and never minding anybody but himself. Uncle Tarrant was as hard and rigid as a machine, and his wife was worse—there was nobody nice but Amy; she was an angel! When I got into scrapes, and spent more money than I ought, she set me right with my uncle, and later—when it was too late for any good, and the rest of them treated me like a dog—she never gave me either a cold look or a hard word. Bless her!”

For the sake of being near his cousin, Dick professed a wish to be a farmer like his cousin and father, which was quite agreeable to the family; and for three years more he stayed in his Uncle Tarrant's house, very much beloved by all—though in his bitterness he said not—for his gaiety and light-heart were like a charm about him. If there was a fault, he had friends too many, for most of them were of a kind not likely to profit a young man.

Coming home one evening, about twilight, from a hunt which he had attended, the poor lad unexpectedly met the crisis of his fate. He told us this with an exactness of detail that made the scene he described like a bit of Dutch painting. I wish I could repeat it to you in his own words, but that is impossible; still I will be as exact as possible.

In Mr. Tarrant's house there was a little parlour especially appropriated to Amy's use. It had a low window with a cushioned seat, from which one long step took you into the garden. In this parlour Amy had her piano, her book-case, her work-basket, her mother's picture on the wall, and several of poor Dick's sketches neatly framed. Dick liked this room better than any other in the house. When the difference betwixt Amy's age and his seemed greater than it did now, it was here he used to come to be helped with his lessons; and later, when his red-hot youth was secretly wreathing all manner of tedious fancies about her, that he used to sit at her

feet reading to her out of some poetry-book, or singing while she worked, or, perhaps, sang, too. These pleasant early intimacies had never been discontinued, for, while Dick's heart was wasting its first passion on his cousin, she was all the while thinking of somebody else. He was a boy to her in point of age still, and this particular day ended his blissful delusions.

Having put his pony in the stable, he made his way at once to Amy's parlour, opening the door softly, for he liked to surprise her. Neither she nor the person with her heard him enter; they were too much occupied with themselves and each other to hear anything. Amy was standing in the window, and beside her, with his arm round her waist, was the straight-haired, pale-featured curate of the parish. It was a clear yellow twilight, and all about Amy's head the lustre shone like a glory; her hands were down-dropt, and the busy fingers were plucking a rose to pieces, petal by petal, and scattering them on the carpet at her feet. She was as blushing herself as the poor rose, and seemed to listen willingly to the pleadings of her lover. Dick noticed the slight quivering of her lips and the humid glitter of her eyes when the low-spoken, tremulous words, meant only for one ear, met his, and he said he felt as if all the blood in his body were driven violently up to his brain by their sound.

The bird in its cage began trilling a loud song as it pecked at a spray of green which the evening wind blew against the wires through the open window, and under cover of its noise poor Dick stole out, leaving the young lovers alone in the blush of their acknowledged love. He went back to the stable, got his pony out, mounted it, and galloped away like mad to rejoin the companions he had left an hour before for Amy's sake. It was not till after midnight that he came home, and then he was reeling drunk. His uncle Tarrant and Amy had sat up for him, and, being quarrelsome in his cups, he insulted the first, and would not speak to his cousin. Poor Dick thought to drown his sorrow, and this was the beginning of his downward course.

The individual whom Amy had chosen to endow with her love had nothing about him particular to approve except his profession. All his attributes, moral, mental, and personal, were negative rather than positive. Poor Dick described him only as Straight-haired, as if that epithet embodied all his qualities. He thought that Amy did not really love him, but was attracted by some imaginary sanctity and perfection with which her imagination invested him. It was very likely: from what we see every day we may be sure that many women have loved, not the man himself they have married, but an ideal which he personates very indifferently indeed to all eyes but theirs.

Dick could not, for many days, restrain the

expression of his feelings. Coming one day suddenly on Amy in the garden where she was walking in maiden meditation, he stopped her and made her listen to his story, which he poured out with much exaggeration of epithet and manner. Amy was startled and distressed: she endeavoured in vain to stop his confession by appealing to his common sense of what was right.

"Dick, you know I am engaged to Henry Lister—you ought not to have spoken—let me go!" said she, for he had grasped her hands tightly in his.

"I ought not to have spoken, and I love you! O! cousin, you don't know what love is if you say so. Amy, it will out! Amy, if I had come before the straight-haired parson, would you have listened to me then?"

A vivid blush flew into the girl's face, but she would not say a word of encouragement; on that blush, however, poor Dick, whether rightly or wrongly, contrived to found a renewed hope. Amy kept his avowal to herself, knowing well that its discovery would entail a total separation from her cousin; and she had become so accustomed to his usefulness and gaiety in a house where everybody else was chilly and methodical, that she could not readily part with him. I incline to think myself that she did like Dick better than the straight-haired curate for many reasons, and Dick himself was persuaded of it. Her indecision had, as may be supposed, a very pernicious effect on his mind and conduct. One day he was in the seventh heaven of hope and contentment, and the next he was the most miserable dog alive: then he would go and forget his griefs in a convivial bout with his comrades, till at length his Uncle Tarrant turned him out of doors. Amy had tried her influence with him in vain.

"You are the cause of it, Amy, and nobody but you," said Dick, passionately; "if you would give that straight-haired fellow warning, you should never have to complain of me again."

But Amy, though she fretted a great deal, held to her engagement, and Dick went on from bad to worse.

It must have been very deplorable to behold the reckless way in which he dissipated his money as soon as he got it into his hands, ruining at once his prospects, his character, and his health. With a temperament that naturally inclined him to self-indulgence, the road to ruin was equally rapid and pleasant. When Amy married Henry Lester—which she did after an engagement of six months—Dick kept no bounds, and he irretrievably offended his family by intruding himself, uninvited, amongst the guests at the wedding. There was a painful scene in Amy's parlour, where he went secretly, as he himself acknowledged, in the wild hope of inducing her to break off the engagement at the eleventh hour. She was dressed ready for church, and her mother was with her. That made no

difference. Poor Dick went down on his knees, and cried, and kissed his cousin's hands, and besought her to listen to him. And Amy fainted. She fainted a second time at the altar when Dick forced himself into her presence and forbade the marriage. He was so frantic, so out of himself, that he had to be removed by compulsory measures before the service could go on. Of course, after a scene like this, his uncle's family kept no terms with him; he was forbidden ever to suffer his shadow to darken their door again—and so the poor, wild, crazed fellow went headlong to destruction. I doubt very much myself whether Amy was worth such a sacrifice; but he thought so. Life, he said, was unendurable without her, and he did not care how soon he ended it.

But this was not all. Amy died of consumption within a year of her marriage, and Dick asserted that she had been killed by bad usage. He went down to his uncle's house where she lay, and asked to see her. The request was refused, and he forced his way, by the window into the room at night, as was afterwards discovered by the disarrangement of the furniture, and stayed there crying over his dead love until dawn. At her funeral he joined the mourners, and showed more grief than any of them; but as the husband was turning away, he walked up to him and shook his clenched fist in his face, crying:

"You killed her, you straight-haired dog!"

It was supposed that if he had not been restrained by the bystanders, he might have done him a mischief. His family gave it out that he was mad. Perhaps he was.

Dice, drinking, and horse-racing now soon made an end of poor Dick's five thousand pounds. He lost every shred of self-respect, and herded with the lowest of the low. There is no telling how a man's troubles may turn him—love-disappointments especially; poor Dick's turned him into a thorough scamp. He was a disgrace to the family, and a misery to himself, but there was this good left in him amidst his degrading excesses—the capability of regretting. He never enjoyed his vices or ceased to feel the horrible debasement of them. He was seen at races, prize-fights, and fairs, in rags and tatters; he was known to have wanted bread, he was suspected of theft and poaching, and his brother Tom rescued him once out of the streets, where he was singing songs disguised as a lame soldier. Tom allowed him a guinea a week, but before he had been in receipt of it a month he made the annuity over to an acquaintance for ten pounds, to take him to Doncaster, and this friend always went with him to receive the money, lest he should lose it, so that Dick suffered extremities while he was supposed to be at least fed and clothed by his family. Ten years of reckless debauchery and poignant misery reduced him to the state in which his uncle Tarrant brought him to me; his aunt Julia who had

brought Tom up offered to give him money if he would go out of the country and never come back again. How he went out of it, I have told already.

When he ceased speaking, I said to encourage him:

"You'll do well yet, Dick, if you keep steady, and we make land or are picked up."

"What can it be," said Dick, without particularly answering, "that brings all these old things over my mind? There's a child's hymn I and Tom used to say at my mother's knee when we were little ones keeps running through my thoughts. It's the stars, maybe; there was a little window by my bed that I used to watch them at—a window in my room at home in Cheshire—and if I was ever afraid, as boys will be after reading a good ghost story, I would keep on saying it till I fell asleep."

"That was a good mother of yours, Dick; could you say that hymn now, do you think? Some of us might like to hear it."

"It's as clear in my mind at this minute as if my mother was here listening to me," said Dick, and he repeated:

"Hear my prayer, O! Heavenly Father,

Ere I lay me down to sleep;

Bid thy Angels, pure and holy,

Round my bed their vigil keep.

"My sins are heavy, but Thy mercy

Far outweighs them every one;

Down before Thy Cross I cast them,

Trusting in Thy help alone.

"Keep me through this night of peril

Underneath its boundless shade;

Take me to Thy rest, I pray Thee,

When my pilgrimage is made.

"None shall measure out Thy patience

By the span of human thought;

None shall bound the tender mercies

Which Thy Holy Son has bought.

"Pardon all my past transgressions,

Give me strength for days to come;

Guide and guard me with Thy blessing

Till Thy Angels bid me home."

After awhile Dick drew his coat up over his head and lay down to sleep.

"Well, poor Dick!" thought I, "it is surely a blessed thing for you that—"

"None shall measure out God's patience.

By the span of human thought;

None shall bound the tender mercies

Which His Holy Son has bought."

A quiet middle-aged gentleman passenger, who was going to establish a Store out there, and had been a kind of supercargo aboard of us besides, told what follows.

She lay off Naarden—the good ship Brocken Spectre, I mean—far out in the roads; and I often thought, as I looked at her through the haze, what an ancient, ill-favoured hulk it was. I suppose I came down some three or four times that day, being in a lounging unsatisfied state of mind;

and took delight in watching the high, old-fashioned poop, as it rocked all day long in that one spot. I likened it to a French roof of the olden time, it was garnished with so many little windows; and over all was the great lantern, which might have served conveniently for the vane or cupola seen upon such structures. For all that, it was not, unpicturesque, and would have filled a corner in a Vandervelde picture harmoniously enough. She was to sail at three o'clock next morning, and I was to be the solitary cabin passenger.

As evening came on, it grew prematurely dark and cloudy; while the waves acquired that dull indigo tint so significant of ugly weather. Raw gusts came sweeping in towards the shore, searching me through and through. I must own to a sinking of the heart as I took note of these symptoms, for a leaning towards ocean in any of its moods had never been one of my failings; and it augured but poorly for the state of the elements next morning. "It will have spent itself during the night," I muttered, doubtfully; and turned back to the inn to eat dinner with what comfort I might.

That place of entertainment stood by itself upon a bleak sandy hill. From its window I could see, afar off, three lights rising and falling together, just where the high poop and lantern had been performing the same ocean-dance in the daytime. I was sitting by the fire, listening ruefully to the wind, when news was brought to me that the Captain, Van Steen, had come ashore, and was waiting below to see me.

I found him walking up and down outside—a short, thick-set man—as it were, built upon the lines of his own vessel.

"Well captain, you wished to see me," I said.

"Look to this, my master," he said, bluntly. "There's a gale brewing yonder, and wild weather coming. So just see to this. If we're not round the Helder Head by to-morrow night, we may have to beat round the Bay for days and days. So look to it, master, and come aboard while there is time."

"I'm ready at any moment," I said; "but how do you expect to get round now? The sea is high enough as it is."

"No matter; the wind may be with us in the morning. We must clear the Head before to-morrow night. Why look you," he added, sinking his voice, mysteriously, "I wouldn't be off Helder to-morrow night—no, not for a sack of guilders!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, don't you know? It's Christmas night—Jan Fagel's night—Captain Jan's!"

"Well?"

"He comes to Helder to-morrow night; he is seen in the Bay. But we are losing time, master," said he, seizing my arm; "get your things ready—these lads will carry them to the boat."

Three figures here advanced out of the shadow, and entered with me. I hastily paid the bill, and set forward with the captain for the shore, where the boat was waiting. My mails were got on board with all expedition, and we were soon far out upon the waters, making steadily for the three lights. It was not blowing very hard as yet; neither had the waves assumed the shape of what are known as white horses; but there was a heavy underground swell, and a peculiar swooping motion quite as disagreeable. Suddenly, I made out the great lantern just over head, shining dimly, as it were through a fog. We had glided under the shadow of a dark mass, wherein there were many more dim lights at long intervals—and all, together seemed performing a wild dance to the music of dismal creaking of timbers, and rattling of chains. As we came under, a voice hailed us out of the darkness—as it seemed from the region of the lantern; and presently invisible hands cast us ropes, whereby, with infinite pains and labour, I was got on deck. I was then guided down steep ways into the cabin, the best place for me under the circumstances. As soon as the wind changed, the captain said, we would put out to sea.

By the light of a dull oil-lamp overhead, that never for a moment ceased swinging, I tried to make out what my new abode was like. It was of an ancient massive fashion, with a dark oak panelling all round, rubbed smooth in many places by wear of time and friction. All round were queer little nooks and projections, mounted in brass and silver, just like the butt-ends of pistols; while here and there were snug recesses that reminded me of canons' stalls in a cathedral. The swinging lamp gave but a faint yellow light, that scarcely reached beyond the centre of the room; so that the oak-work all round cast little grotesque shadows, which had a very gloomy and depressing effect. There was a sort of oaken shelf at one end—handsomely wrought, no doubt, but a failure as to sleeping capabilities. Into this I introduced myself, without delay, and soon fell off into a profound slumber, for I was weary enough.

When I awoke again, I found there was a figure standing over me, who said he was Mr. Bode the mate, who wished to know, could he serve me in any way? Had we started yet? I asked. Yes, we had started—above an hour now—but she was not making much way. Would I get up—this was Christmas day. So it was; I had forgotten that. What a place to hold that inspiring festival in! Mr. Bode, who was inclined to be communicative, then added that it was blowing great guns: whereof I had abundant confirmation from my own physical sufferings, then just commencing. No, I would not—could not get up; and so, for the rest of that day, dragged on a miserable existence, many

times, wishing that the waters would rise and cover me. Late in the evening I fell into a kind of uneasy doze, which was balm of Gilead to the tempest-tost landsman.

When I awoke again, it was night once more; at least, there was the dull oil-lamp, swinging lazily as before. There was the same painful music—the same eternal creaking and straining, as of ship's timbers in agony. What o'clock was it? Where were we now? Better make an effort, and go up, and see how we were getting on—it was so lonely down here. Come in!

Here the door was opened, and Mr. Bode the mate presented himself. It was a bad night, Mr. Bode said—a very bad night.—He had come to tell me we were off the Head at last. He thought I might care to know.

"I am glad to hear it," I said faintly; "it will be something smoother in the open sea."

He shook his head. "No open sea for us to-night; no, nor to-morrow night most likely."

"What is all this mystery?" said I, now recollecting the captain's strange allusions at the inn door. "What do you mean?"

"It is Jan Fagel's night," said he solemnly. "He comes into the bay to-night. An hour more of the wind, and we should have been clear. But we did what we could—a man can do no more than his best."

"But who is Jan Fagel?"

"You never heard?"

"Never. Tell me about him."

"Well," said he, "I shan't be wanted on deck for some time yet, so I may as well be here." And Mr. Bode settled himself in one of the canons' stalls, thus retiring into the shadow, and began the history of Jan Fagel and his vessel.

"You have never heard of the famous brig Maelström, once on a time well known in these roads? No,—for you have not been much about here, I dare say; and it is only old sea-folk like myself that would care to talk to you of such things. But I can tell you this—there's not a sailor along the coast that hasn't the story, though it's now—let me see—a good hundred years since she made her last cruise. Why, I recollect when I was a boy, the old hull lying on the sands, and breaking up with every tide—for she came to that end after all—the famous Maelström, Captain Jan Fagel, commander. I have been told there never was such a boat for foul weather, but that was when he was on board of her. He was a terrible man, was Captain Fagel, and would turn wild when a gale got up; and as the wind blew harder, so he grew wilder, until at last it seemed as if he had gone mad altogether. Why, there was one night my father used to tell of, when there was a great thunderstorm, and the sea was washing over the lighthouses—the most awful night he ever was out in—it was said that when the flashes came, Captain Jan had been seen dancing and skipping upon his

deck. Many of his sailors told afterwards how they heard his mad shrieks above the roaring of the wind! Some said he had sold himself to the Evil One, which I think myself more than likely, for he cared neither for God nor man.

"Well sir, Captain Fagel took first to the smuggling trade; and soon he and his famous brig became known all along the coast, from Hoek up to Helder—ay, and beyond that. But he was seen oftenest at the Head—as if he had a sort of liking for the place—and always came and went in a storm. So, that when the Zuyder was like a boiling cauldron, and the water running over the lighthouse galleries, old sailors would look up in the wind's eye, and say 'Captain Fagel's running a cargo to-night.' At last it came to this, that whenever he was seen off Helder, he was thought to bring a storm with him. And then they would shake their heads, and say Captain Fagel was abroad that night. Soon he grew tired of this work—it was too quiet for him—so he turned Rover, and ran up the black flag. He still kept up his old fashion of bearing down in a gale; and many a poor disabled craft that was struggling hard to keep herself afloat, would see the black hull of the Maelström coming down upon her in the storm, and so would perish miserably upon the rocks. He was no true sailor, sir, that captain, but a low pirate; and he came to a pirate's end. And this was the way he fell upon his last cruise, just off Helder Head yonder.

"There was a certain councillor of the town who had many times crossed him in his schemes, and had once been near taking him. Fagel hated him like poison, and swore he would have his revenge of him, one day. But the councillor did not fear him—not a bit of him, but even offered a reward to whoever would take or destroy Captain Fagel and his vessel. When the captain came to hear of this he fell to raving and foaming at the mouth, and then swore a great oath upon his own soul that he would be revenged of the councillor. And this was the way he went about it:

The councillor had a fair, young wife, Madame Elde, whom he had brought out of France some years before, and whom he loved exceedingly—foolishly, some said, for a man of his years. They and their little girl, lived together at a place called Loo, and no family could be happier. Jan Fagel knew the place well, and laid his devilish plans accordingly. So, as usual, on one of his wild, stormy nights, the brig was seen standing in to shore—for no good purpose, as everybody guessed. How he and his mad crew got to land was never accounted for—but this is certain—they broke into the house at Loo, and dragged Madame Elde and her child from their beds, and forced them down to their boats. The councillor was away in

the city; but Captain Jan knew well enough how he loved his wife, and chose this way of torturing him. An old fisherman, who lived hard by the shore, said, that he woke up suddenly in the night, and heard their screams; but they were too many for him, or he would have gone out. He was an old man, and it was only natural. They then pulled away for the ship, he standing up, and screaming at the waves like a fiend incarnate, as he was. How the poor passengers ever got alive on board was a miracle—for the waves came dashing over the bows of the boat, where they were lying, at every stroke.

"Now it fell out, that at this time, there was a British frigate cruising about these parts—for Captain Fagel had a short time before this, fired into an English vessel. The frigate was, therefore, keeping a sharp look-out for the brig, and had been looking into all the creeks and harbours along the coasts, when she was caught in this very storm—of Captain Fagel's raising. Just as she was struggling round the Head, she came upon the Maelström, taking on board her boat's crew.

"Let go all clear!" they heard him cry, even above the storm—and then they saw the dark hull swing round, and set off along shore, where it was hard for the frigate to follow. As for Jan Fagel, if ever Satan entered into a man in this life, he must have possessed him that night! They could hear him from the other vessel, as he shrieked with delight, and swore, and bounded along his deck, when other men could scarcely keep their feet. Why, sir, one time, he was seen on the edge of the taffrail—his eyes looking in the dark like two burning coals! No doubt he would have got away from them, after all—for there was no better mariner in those seas—when just as he was coming round a point, they heard a crash, and down came his topmast upon his deck. The sailors rushed to clear away the wreck.

"Bring up the woman," he roared through his trumpet. "Bring up the woman and child, you sea imps!" Though his ship was in danger, he thought of the councillor. Some of them rushed down into the hold, and came up in a moment with Madame Elde and the little girl. She was quite scared and sank down upon the deck, as if she were insensible.

"A handsome creature, sir," they said, even some of those savages felt for her. They heard her saying over and over again to herself:

"O, such a Christmas night! Such a Christmas night!"

"He overheard her.

"Ah, ah! witch! you shall have a merry Christmas. Never fear. So should your husband—curse him—if we had him here."

"She started up with a scream when she heard him speaking. And then they saw her standing, with her long black hair blown back by the wind, and her arms out, as if

she were praying. 'Where shall Thy judgments find this man!'

"Here, witch! Look for me here on a stormy night—any night; next Christmas, if you like. Hi, lads! get a sail here, and send them over the side."

"Even those ruffians hung back, for it was too awful a night for them to add murder to their other sins. So, with many oaths, Captain Fagel went forward himself to seize the lady.

"He shall meet me before the Judgment seat," said she, still praying.

"Cant away, sorceress! come back here of a stormy night, and I'll meet you: I'm not afraid; and he laughed long and loud.

"Then he flung the wet sail round them, and with his own hands cast them into the sea. The storm came on fiercer than ever, and they thought that the ship's timbers were going to part. But Jan Fagel strode about his deck, and gave his orders and she bore up well before the wind. It seemed that no harm could come to that ship when he was on board of her. As for the frigate, she had long since got away into the open sea. But the lady's words were not to be in vain, for just as he was going due of his mad bounds along the poop, his foot caught in a coil of rope, and he went over with an unearthly scream into the black, swollen sea. All the crew ran to look out after him, but, strange to tell, without so much as thinking of casting him a rope. It seemed as if they had lost their sense for a time, and could only stand there looking into the waves that had swept him off. Just then, the wind went down a little, and they heard a voice high in the mainmast-top, as if some one were calling; and these words came to them very clear and distinct: 'Yo, yo! Jan Fagel, yo!' Then all the crew at the vessel's side, as if they had caught some of his own devilish spirit, could not keep themselves from giving out, in a great wild chorus, 'Yo, yo! Jan Fagel, yo!' Once more the voice came from the mainmast-top, calling, 'Yo, yo! Jan Fagel, yo!' and again the crew answered, louder than before, as if they were possessed. He was seen no more after that.

"The memory of that night never left that wicked crew; and many of them, when dying quietly in their beds long after, started up with that cry, as though they were answering a call, and so passed away to their last account.

"Every year, as sure as Christmas night comes round, Jan Fagel comes into the bay to keep his word with Madame Elde. And, any ship that is off the Head then, must wait and beat about until midnight; when he goes away.

"But they are wanting me on deck," said Mr. Bode, looking at his watch. "I have stayed too long as it is."

Mr. Bode hastily departed, leaving me to ponder over his wild legend. Ruminating upon it, and listening to the rushing of the

water, close to my ear, I fell off again in a sleep, and began to dream; and, of course, dreamed of Captain Jan Fagel.

It was a wild and troubled sleep, that I had; and I am sure, if any one had been standing near, they would have seen me starting and turning uneasily, as if in grievous trouble. First, I thought I was ashore again, in a sheltered haven, safely delivered from all this wretched tossing. And I recollect how inexpressibly delightful the feeling of repose was, after all these weary labours. By-and-by, I remarked low-roofed old-fashioned houses all about, seemingly of wood, with little galleries running round the windows. And I saw stately burghers walking, in dresses centuries old, and ladies with great round frills about their necks, and looking very stiff and majestic, sat and talked to the burghers. They were coming in and out of the queer houses, and some passed quite close to me, saluting me, as they did so, very graciously. One thing seemed very strange to me. They had all a curious dried look about their faces, and a sort of stony cast in their eyes, which I could not make out. Still they came and went, and I looked on and wondered. Suddenly I saw the little Dutch houses and the figures all quivering and getting indistinct, and gradually the picture faded away until it grew slowly into the shape of the cabin where I was now lying. There it was, all before me, with the canon's stalls and the dull swinging lamp, and I myself leaning on one hand in the carved crib, and thinking what a weary voyage this was! How monotonous the rushing sound of the water! Then my dream went on, and it seemed to me that I took note of a canon's stall in the centre, something larger and better-fashioned than the others—the dean's, most likely, I concluded wisely, when he comes to service. And then on that hint, as it were, I seemed to travel away over the waters to ancient aisles, and tracery and soft ravishing music, and snowy figures seen afar off duskily amid clouds of incense. In time, too, all that faded away, and I was back again in the oak cabin, with the sickly yellow light suffusing everything, and a dark misty figure sitting right opposite. He caused me no surprise or astonishment, and I received him there as a matter of course, as people do in dreams. I had seen figures like him somewhere. In Rembrandt's pictures, was it? Most likely; for there was the large broad hat, and the stiff white collar and tassels, and the dark jerkin; only there was a rusty, mouldering look about his garments that seemed very strange to me. He had an ancient sword, too, on which he leaned his arm; and so sat there motionless, looking on the ground. He sat that way I don't know how long; I, as it seemed to me, studying him intently; when suddenly the rushing sound ceased, and there came a faint cry across the waters, as if from afar off. It was the old cry:

"Yo, yo! Jan Fagel, yo!" Then I saw the figure raise its head suddenly, and the yellow light fell upon his face—such a mournful, despairing face!—with the same stony gaze I had seen in the others. Again the fearful cry came—nearer, as it seemed; and I saw the figure rise up slowly and walk across the cabin to the door. As he passed me he turned his dead, lack-lustre eyes full upon me, and looked at me for an instant. Never shall I forget that moment. It was as if a horrid weight was pressing on me. I felt such agony that I awoke with a start, and found myself sitting up and trembling all over. But at that instant; whether the dreamy influence had not wholly passed away, or whatever was the reason I don't know; I can swear that, above the rushing sound of the waves and the whistling of the wind, I heard that ghostly chorus "Yo, yo! Jan Fagel, yo!" quite clear and distinct.

An old Seaman in the Surt-boat sang this ballad, as his story, to a curious sort of tuneful no-tune, which none of the rest could remember afterwards.

I HAVE seen a fiercer tempest,
Known a louder whirlwind blow.
I was wreck'd off red Algiers,
Six-and-thirty years ago.
Young I was,—and yet old seamen
Were not strong or calm as I;
While life held such treasures for me,
I felt sure I could not die.

Life I struggled for—and saved it;
Life alone—and nothing more;
Bruised, half dead, alone and helpless,
I was cast upon the shore.
I fear'd the pitiless rocks of Ocean;
So the great sea rose—and then
Cast me from her friendly bosom,
On the pitiless hearts of men.

Gaunt and dreary ran the mountains
With black gorges up the land;
Up to where the lonely Desert
Spreads her burning dreary sand:
In the gorges of the mountains,
On the plain beside the sea,
Dwelt my stern and cruel masters,
The black Moors of Barbary.

Ten long years I toil'd among them,
Hopeless—as I used to say;
Now I know Hope burnt within me
Fiercer, stronger, day by day:
Those dim years of toil and sorrow
Like one long dark dream appear;
One long day of weary waiting;—
Then each day was like a year.

How I curst the land—my prison;
How I curst the serpent sea,—
And the Demon Fate, that shower'd
All her curses upon me:
I was mad, I think—God pardon
Words so terrible and wild—
This voyage would have been my last one,
For I lost a wife and child.

Never did one tender vision
 Fade away before my sight,
 Never once through all my slavery,
 Burning day or dreary night;
 In my soul it lived, and kept me,
 Now I feel, from black despair,
 And my heart was not quite broken,
 While they lived and blest me there.

When at night my task was over,
 I would hasten to the shore;
 (All was strange and foreign inland,
 Nothing I had known before).
 Strange look'd the bleak mountain passes,
 Strange the red glare and black shade,
 And the Oleanders, waving
 To the sound the fountains made.

Then I gazed at the great Ocean,
 Till she grew a friend again;
 And because she knew old England,
 I forgave her all my pain:
 So the blue still sky above me,
 With its white clouds' fleecy fold,
 And the glimmering stars (though brighter),
 Look'd like home and days of old.

And a calm would fall upon me;
 Worn perhaps with work and pain,
 The wild hungry longing left me,
 And I was myself again:
 Looking at the silver waters,
 Looking up at the far sky,
 Dreams of home and all I left there
 Floated sorrowfully by.

A fair face, but pale with sorrow,
 With blue eyes, brimful of tears,
 And the little red mouth, quivering
 With a smile, to hide its fears;
 Holding out her baby towards me,
 From the sky she look'd on me;
 So it was that I last saw her,
 As the ship put out to sea.

Sometimes (and a pang would seize me
 That the years were floating on)
 I would strive to paint her, alter'd,
 And the little baby gone:
 She no longer young and girlish,
 The child, standing by her knee,
 And her face, more pale and sudden'd
 With the weariness for me.

Then I saw, as night grew darker,
 How she taught my child to pray,
 Holding its small hands together,
 For its father, far away;
 And I felt her sorrow, weighing
 Heavier on me than mine own;
 Pitying her blighted spring-time,
 And her joy so early flown.

Till upon my hands (now harden'd
 With the rough harsh toil of years)
 Bitter drops of anguish, falling,
 Woke me from my dream, to tears;
 Woke me as a slave, an outcast,
 Leagues from home, across the deep;
 So—though you may call it childish—
 So I sobb'd myself to sleep.

Well, the years sped on—my sorrow
 Calmer, and yet stronger grown,
 Was my shield against all suffering,
 Greater, measure, than her own.

So my cruel master's harshness
 Fell upon me all in vain,
 Yet the tale of what we suffer'd
 Echo'd back from main to main.

You have heard in a far country
 Of a self-devoted band,
 Vow'd to rescue Christian captives
 Pining in a foreign land.
 And these gentle-hearted strangers
 Year by year go forth from Rome,
 In their hands the hard-earn'd ransom,
 To restore some exiles home.

I was freed: they broke the tidings
 Gently to me; but indeed
 Hour by hour sped on, I knew not
 What the words meant—I was freed!
 Better so, perhaps, while sorrow
 (More akin to earthly things)
 Only strains the sad heart's fibres—
 Joy, bright stranger, breaks the strings.

Yet at last it rush'd upon me,
 And my heart beat full and fast;
 What were now my years of waiting,
 What was all the dreary past?
 Nothing, to the impatient throbbing
 I must bear across the sea:
 Nothing to the cruel hours
 Still between my home and me!

How the voyage pass'd, I know not;
 Strange it was once more to stand,
 With my countrymen around me,
 And to clasp an English hand.
 But, through all, my heart was dreaming
 Of the first words I should hear,
 In the gentle voice that echo'd,
 Fresh as ever, on my ear.

Should I see her start of wonder,
 And the sudden truth arise,
 Flushing all her face and lightening
 The dimm'd splendour of her eyes?
 O! to watch the fear and doubting
 Stir the silent depths of pain,
 And the rush of joy—then melting
 Into perfect peace again.

And the child!—but why remember
 Foolish fancies that I thought?
 Every tree and every hedgerow
 From the well-known past I brought;
 I would picture my dear cottage,
 See the crackling wood-fire burn,
 And the two beside it, seated
 Watching, waiting, my return.

So, at last we reach'd the harbour.
 I remember nothing more
 Till I stood, my sick heart throbbing
 With my hand upon the door.
 There I paused—I heard her speaking;
 Low, soft, murmuring words she said
 Then I first knew the dumb terror
 I had had, lest she were dead.

It was evening in late autumn,
 And the gusty wind blew chill;
 Autumn leaves were falling round me,
 And the red sun lit the hill.
 Six and twenty years are vanish'd
 Since then—I am old and grey—
 But I never told to mortal
 What I saw, until this day.

She was seated by the fire,
In her arms she held a child,
Whispering baby-words caressing,
And then, looking up, she smiled.
Smiled on him who stood beside her—
O! the bitter truth was told!
In her look of trusting fondness,
I had seen the look of old.

But she rose and turn'd towards me
(Cold and dumb I waited there),
With a shriek of fear and terror,
And a white face of despair.
He had been an ancient comrade—
Not a single word we said,
While we gazed upon each other,
He the living: I the dead!

I drew nearer, nearer to her,
And I took her trembling hand,
Looking on her white face, looking
That her heart might understand
All the love and all the pity
That my lips refused to say!
I thank God no thought save sorrow
Rose in our crush'd hearts that day.

Bitter tears that desolate moment,
Bitter, bitter tears we wept
We three broken hearts together,
While the baby smiled and slept.
Tears alone—no words were spoken,
Till he—till her husband said
That my boy (I had forgotten
The poor child), that he was dead.

Then at last I rose, and, turning,
Wring his hand, but made no sign;
And I stoop'd and kiss'd her forehead
Once more, as if she were mine.
Nothing of farewell I utter'd,
Save in broken words to pray
That God in His great love would bless her—
Then in silence pass'd away.

Over the great restless ocean
For twenty and six years I roam;
All my comrades, old and weary,
Have gone back to die at home.
Home! yes, I shall reach a haven,
I, too, shall reach home and rest;
I shall find her waiting for me
With our baby on her breast.

While the foregoing story was being told, I had kept my eye fixed upon little Willy Lindsey, a young Scotch boy (one of the two apprentices), who had been recommended to Captain Ravender's care by a friend in Glasgow; and very sad it was to see the expression of his face. All the early part of the voyage he had been a favourite in the ship. The ballads he sang, and the curious old stories he told, made him a popular visitor in the cabin, no less than among the people. Though only entered as apprentice seaman, Captain Ravender had kept him as much about him as he could; and I am bold to say, the lad's affection for Captain Ravender was as sincere as if he had been one of his own blood. Even before the wreck, a change had taken place in his manner. He

grew silent and thoughtful. Mrs. Athersfield and Miss Coleshaw, who had been very kind to him, observed the alteration, and bantered him on the melancholy nature of the songs he sang to them, and the sad air with which he went about the duties of the vessel. I asked him if anything had occurred to make him dull; but he put me off with a laugh, and at last told me that he was thinking about his home; for, said he, a certain anniversary was coming soon; "and maybe I'll tell you," he added, "why the expectation of it makes me so sorrowful."

He was a nice, delicate, almost feminine-looking boy, of sixteen or seventeen; the son of a small farmer in Ayrshire, as Captain Ravender's Glasgow friend had told him, and, as usual with his countrymen, a capital hand at letters and accounts. He had brought with him, a few books, chiefly of the wild and supernatural kind; and it seemed as if he had given way to his imagination more than was quite healthy, perhaps, for the other faculties of his mind. But we all set down his delight and belief in ghost stories and such like, to the superstition of his country, where the folks seem to make up for being the most matter-of-fact people in Europe in the affairs of this world, by being the wildest and most visionary inquirers into the affairs of the next. Willy had been useful to all departments on board. The steward had employed him at his ledger, Captain Ravender at his reckonings, and as to the passengers, they had made quite a friend and companion of the youth.

So I watched his looks, as I've said before, and I now beckoned Willy to come to my side, that I might keep him as warm as I could. At first he either did not perceive my signal, or was too apathetic or too deep sunk in his own thoughts to act upon it. But the carpenter, who sat next him, seeing my motion, helped him across the boat, and I put my arm round his shoulders.

"Bear up, Willy," I said, "you're young and strong, and, with the help of Heaven, we shall all live to see our friends again."

The boy's eye brightened with hope for a moment; then he shook his head and said:

"You're very kind to say so, sir; but it canna be—at least for me."

The night was now closing fast in, but there was still light enough to see his face. It was quite calm, and wore a sort of smile. Everybody listened to hear what the poor laddie said; and I whispered to him:

"You promised to tell me why you were depressed by the coming of an anniversary, Willy. When is it?"

"It's to-night," he said, with a solemn voice. "And O! how different this is from what it used to be! It's the birth-day of my sister Jean."

"Come, tell us all about it," I said. "Maybe, speaking it out, openly will ease

your mind. Here, rest on my shoulder. Now say on."

We all tried to catch his words, and he began:

"It's two years ago, this very day, since we had such a merry night of it in my father's house at home. He was a farmer in a sma' way up among the hills above the Doon; and had the lands on a good tack, and was thought a richer man than any of his neighbours. There was only Jean and me o' the family; and I'm thinking nobody was ever so happy or well cared for as I was a' the time I was young. For my mither would let me want for nothing, and took me on her knee and tauld me long histories o' the Bruce and Wallace; and strange adventures with the warlocks; and sang me a' Burns' songs, forbye reading me the grand auld stories out o' the Bible, about the death o' Goliath and the meeting o' King Saul and the Witch of Endor. Jean was a kind o' mither to me, too; for she was five years older, and spoilt me as much as she could. She was so bonny, it was a pleasure to look at her; and she helpit in the dairy, and often milkt the cows hersel'; and in the winter nights sat by the side o' the bleazy fire, and turned the reel or span, keepin' time wi' some lang ballad about cruel Ranken coming in and killing Lady Margaret; or the ship that sailed away to Norway wi' Sir Patrick Spence, and sank wi' all the crew. The schoolmaster came up, when he was able, to gi'e me lessons; and as the road was long, and the nights were sometimes dark, it soon grew into the common custom for him to come up ow'r the hills on Friday, when the school was skailt, and stay till the Monday morning. He was a young man that had been intended for a minister, but the college expenses had been too much, and he had settled down as the parish teacher at Shalloch; and we always called him Dominie Blair. All the week through, we looked for the Dominie's coming. Jean and I used to go and meet him at the bend o' the hill, where he came off from the high-road, and he began his lessons to me in botany the moment we turned towards home. I noticed that he aye required the specimens that grew at the side o' the burns that ran down valleys a good way off; but I was very vain of my running, and used to rush down the gully and gather the flower or weed, and overtake the two before they had walked on a mile. So you see, sir, it was na long before it was known all over the country side that Dominie Blair was going to marry my sister Jean. Everybody thought it a capital match, for Jean had beauty and killer, and Mr. Blair was the cleverest man in the county, and had the promise of the mastership of a school in the East country, with ninety pounds a-year. Our house grew happier now than ever; and when Jean's birthday came round, there was a gathering

from far and near to do honour to the bonniest and kindest lass in all the parish. The minister himsel' came up on his pony, and drank prosperity to the young folks at the door; and inside at night there was a supper for all the neighbours, and John Chalmers played on the fiddle, and a' the rest of us sang songs, and danced and skirled like mad; and at last, when Jean's health was drank, with many wishes for her happiness, up she gets and lays her arms round my auld mither's neck, and bursts out into a great passion o' tears; and when she recovered herself, she said she would never be so happy anywhere else, and that weel or ill, dead or alive—in the body or in the spirit—she would aye come back on that night, and look in on the hame where she had spent sae sunshiny a life. Some o' them laughed at the wild affection she showed; and some took it seriously, and thought she had tied herself down by ow'r solemn a bargain; but in a wee while the mirth and frolicking gaed on as before, and all the company confessed it was the happiest evening they had ever spent in their lives. Do you ken Loch Luat, sir?—a wee bit water that stretches across between the Lureloch and the Breelen? Ah! the grand shadows that pass along it when you stand on the north side and look over to the hill. There's a great blackness settled upon the face, as if the sun had died away from the heavens altogether, till when he comes round the corner o' the mountain, a glorious procession o' sunbeams and colours taks its course across the whole length o' the water, and all the hill sides give out a kind o' glow, and at last the loch seems all on fire, and you can scarcely look at it for the brightness. A small skiff was kept at the side, for it saved the shepherds miles o' steep climbing to get from flock to flock, as it cut off two or three miles o' the distance between our house and Shalloch. One Friday, soon after the merry meeting at Jean's birthday, she set off as usual to meet Mr. Blair. How far she went, or where she met him, nobody could tell, for nothing was ever seen or heard o' them from that day to this; only the skiff on Loch Luat was found keel up, and the prints o' feet that answered to their size were seen on the wet bank. Nothing wad persuade my mother for many a day that she wana coming back. When she heard a step at the door, she used to flush up with a great redness in her cheek, and run to let her in. Then when she saw it was a stranger, she left the door open and came back into the kitchen without sayin' a word. My father spoke very little, but sometimes he seemed to forget that Jean was taken away, and called for her to come to him in a cheery voice, as he used to do; and then, wi' a sudden shake o' his head, he remembered that she was gone, and passed away to his work as if his heart was broken. And other things came on to disturb him

now, for some bank, or railway, or something o' the kind, where he had bought some shares, failed with a great crash, and he was called on to make up the loss; and he grew careless about everything that happened, and the horses and carts were seized for debt, and a' the cows except two were taken away, and the place began to go to wrack and ruin; and at last Jean's birthday cam' round again. But we never spoke about it the whole day long, though none of the three thought of anything else. My father pretended to be busy in the field; my mother span—never letting the thread out o' her hand; and as for me, I wandered about the hills from early morning, and only came back when the dark night began. All through the lengthening hours we sat and never spoke; but sometimes my father put a fresh supply of peats upon the fire, and stirred it up into a blaze, as if it pleased him to see the great sparkles flying up the chimney. At last my mother, all of a sudden, ceased her spinning, and said, 'Hark! do you no' hear somebody outside?' And we listened without getting up from our seats. We heard a sound as if somebody was slipping by on tip-toe on the way to the Byre; and then we heard a low, wailing sound, as if the person was trying to restrain some great sorrow; and immediately we heard the same footstep, as if it were lost in snow, coming up to the house. My mither stood up wi' her hand stretched out, and looked at the window. Outside the pane—where the rose-tree has grown sae thick it half hides the lower half—we heard a rustling, as if somebody was putting aside the leaves, and then, when a sudden flicker o' the flame threw its light upon the casement, we saw the faint image o' a bonny pale face—very sad to look on—wi' lang tresses o' yellow hair hanging straight down the cheeks, as if it was dripping wet, and heard low, plaintive sobs; but nothing that we could understand. My mither ran forward, as if to embrace the visitor, and cried, 'Jean! Jean! O, let me speak to you, my bairn!' But the flame suddenly died away in the grate, and we saw nothing mair. But we all knew now that Jean had been drowned in Loch Luart, and that she minded the promise she had made to come, and see the auld house upon her birthday."

Here the boy paused in his narrative for a moment, and I felt his breath coming and going very quick, as if his strength was getting rapidly exhausted.

"Rest a while, Willy," I said, "and try, if you can, to sleep."

But nothing could restrain him from finishing his tale.

"Na, na! I canna rest upon your arm, sir. I ha'e wark to do, and it maun be done this night—wae's me! I didna think, last year at this time, that ever I wad be here." He looked round with a shudder at the coiling waves that rose high at the side of

the boat, and shut out the faint glimmer that still lingered on the horizon line. "So Jean was drowned, ye see," he continued; "and couldna put foot inside—for a' they can do is to look in and see what's doing at the auld fireside through the window. But even this was a comfort to my mither; and as I saw how glad it made her to have this assurance that she wasna forgotten, I made her the same promise that Jean had done on her birthday: ill or weel, happy or miserable, in the body or in the spirit—I wad find my way to the farm-house, and gie her some sign that I loved her as I had always done. And now I ken what they're doing as if I was at hame. They're sitting sad and lonely in the silent kitchen. My father puts fresh peats upon the grate, and watches their flame as it leaps and crackles up the fireplace; and my mither—Ah!"—here he stretched forward as if to see some object before him more distinctly—"ah! she's spinning, spinning as if to keep herself from thinking—and tears are running down her face; and I see the cheery fire, and the heather bed in the corner, and the round table in the middle, and the picture o' Abraham and Isaac on the wall, and my fishing-rod hung up aboon the mantelpiece, and my herding-staff, and my old blue bonnet. But how cold it is, sir," he went on, turning to me; "I felt a touch on my shoulder just now that made me creep as if the hand were ice; and I looked up and saw the same face we had noticed last year; and I feel the clammy fingers yet, and they go downward—downward, chilling me a' the way till my blood seems frozen, and I canna speak. O, for anither look at the fire and the warm cosy room, and my father's white head, and my puir auld mither's een!"

So saying, he tried to rise, and seemed to be busy putting aside something that interfered with his view. "The rose-tree!" he said; "it's thicker than ever, and I canna see clear!" At last he appeared to get near the object he sought; and, after altering his position, as if to gain a perfect sight, he said: "I see them a' again. O, mither! turn your face this way, for ye see I've kept my word; and we're both here. Jean's beside me, and very cold—and we darena come in." He watched for about a minute, still gazing intently, and then, with a joyous scream, he exclaimed: "She sees me,—she sees me! Did na ye hear her cry? O mither, mither! tak' me to your arms, for I'm chilled wi' the salt water, and naething will make me warm again."

I tightened my hold of poor Willy as he spoke, for he gradually lost his power, and at last lay speechless with his head on my shoulder. I concealed from the rest the sad event that occurred in a few minutes, and kept the body hidden till the darkest part of the night, closely wrapped in my cloak.

THE DELIVERANCE.

When the sun rose on the twenty-seventh day of our calamity, the first question that I secretly asked myself was, How many more mornings will the stoutest of us live to see? I had kept count, ever since we took to the boats, of the days of the week; and I knew that we had now arrived at another Thursday. Judging by my own sensations (and I believe I had as much strength left as the best man among us), I came to the conclusion that, unless the mercy of Providence interposed to effect our deliverance, not one of our company could hope to see another morning after the morning of Sunday.

Two discoveries that I made—after redeeming my promise overnight, to serve out with the morning whatever eatable thing I could find—helped to confirm me in my gloomy view of our future prospects. In the first place, when the few coffee-berries left, together with a small allowance of water, had been shared all round, I found on examining the lockers that not one grain of provision remained, fore or aft, in any part of the boat, and that our stock of fresh water was reduced to not much more than would fill a wine-bottle. In the second place, after the berries had been shared, and the water equally divided, I noticed that the sustenance thus administered produced no effect whatever, even of the most momentary kind, in raising the spirits of the passengers (excepting in one case) or in rallying the strength of the crew. The exception was Mr. Rarr: This tough and greedy old sinner seemed to wake up from the trance he had lain in so long, when the smell of the berries and water was under his nose. He swallowed his share with a gulp that many a younger and better man in the boat might have envied; and went maundering on to himself afterwards, as if he had got a new lease of life. He fancied now that he was digging a gold mine, all by himself, and going down bodily straight through the earth at the rate of thirty or forty miles an hour. "Leave me alone," says he, "leave me alone: The lower I go, the richer I get. Down I go!—down, down, down, down, till I burst out at the other end of the world in a shower of gold!" So he went on, kicking feebly with his heels from time to time against the bottom of the boat.

But, as for all the rest, it was a pitiful and fearful sight to see of how little use their last shadow of a meal was to them. I myself attended, before anybody else was served, to the two poor women. Miss Colshaw shook her head faintly, and pointed to her throat, when I offered her the few berries that fell to her share. I made a shift to crush them up fine and mix them with a little water, and got her to swallow that miserable drop of drink with the greatest difficulty. When it was down there came no

change for the better over her face. Nor did she recover, for so much as a moment, the capacity to speak even in a whisper. I next tried Mrs. Atherfield. It was hard to wake her out of the half-swooning, half-sleeping condition in which she lay,—and harder still to get her to open her lips when I put the tin-cup to them. When I had at last prevailed on her to swallow her allowance, she shut her eyes again, and fell back into her old position. I saw her lips moving; and, putting my ear close to them, caught some of the words she was murmuring to herself. She was still dreaming of The Golden Lucy. She and the child were walking somewhere by the banks of a lake, at the time when the buttercups are out. The Golden Lucy was gathering the buttercups, and making herself a watch-chain out of them, in imitation of the chain that her mother wore. They were carrying a little basket with them, and were going to dine together in a great hollow tree growing on the banks of the lake. To get this pretty picture painted on one's mind as I got it, while listening to the poor mother's broken words, and then to look up at the haggard faces of the men in the boat, and at the wild ocean rolling all round us, was such a change from fancy to reality as it has fallen, I hope, to few men's lots to experience.

My next thought, when I had done my best for the women, was for the Captain. I was free to risk losing my own share of water, if I pleased, so I tried, before tasting it myself, to get a little between his lips; but his teeth were fast clenched, and I had neither strength nor skill to open them. The faint warmth still remained, thank God, over his heart—but, in all other respects he lay beneath us like a dead man. In covering him up again as comfortably as I could, I found a bit of paper crunched in one of his hands, and took it out. There was some writing on it, but not a word was readable. I supposed, poor fellow, that he had been trying to write some last instructions for me, just before he dropped at his post. If they had been ever so easy to read, they would have been of no use now. To follow instructions we must have had some power to shape the boat's course in a given direction—and this, which we had been gradually losing for some days past, we had now lost altogether.

I had hoped that the serving out of the refreshment would have put a little modicum of strength into the arms of the men at the oars; but, as I have hinted, this hope turned out to be perfectly fruitless. Our last mockery of a meal, which had done nothing for the passengers, did nothing either for the crew—except to aggravate the pangs of hunger in the men who were still strong enough to feel them. While the weather

held moderate, it was not of much consequence if one or two of the rowers kept dropping, in turn, into a kind of faint sleep over their oars. But if it came on to blow again (and we could expect nothing else in those seas and at that time of the year), how was I to steer, when the blades of the oars were out of the water ten times as often as they were in? The lives which we had undergone such suffering to preserve would have been lost in an instant by the swamping of the boat, if the wind had risen on the morning of Thursday, and had caught us trying to row any longer.

Feeling this, I resolved, while the weather held moderately fine, to hoist the best substitute for a sail that we could produce, and to drive before the wind, on the chance (the last we had to hope for) of a ship picking us up. We had only continued to use the oars up to this time, in order to keep the course which the Captain had pointed out as likeliest to bring us near the land. Sailing had been out of the question from the first, the masts and suits of sails belonging to each boat having been out of them at the time of the wreck, and having gone down with the ship. This was an accident which there was no need to deplore, for we were too crowded from the first to admit of handling the boats properly, under their regular press of sail, in anything like rough weather.

Having made up my mind on what it was necessary to do, I addressed the men, and told them that any notion of holding longer on our course with the oars was manifestly out of the question, and dangerous to all on board, as their own common sense might tell them, in the state to which the stoutest arms among us were now reduced. They looked round on each other as I said that, each man seeming to think his neighbour weaker than himself. I went on, and told them that we must take advantage of our present glimpse of moderate weather, and hoist the best sail we could set up, and drive before the wind, in the hope that it might please God to direct us in the way of some ship before it was too late. "Our only chance, my men," I said, in conclusion, "is the chance of being picked up; and in these desolate seas one point of the compass is just as likely a point for our necessities as another. Half of you keep the boat before the sea, the other half bring out your knives, and do as I tell you." The prospect of being relieved from the oars struck the wandering attention of the men directly; and they said, "Ay, ay, sir!" with something like a faint reflection of their former readiness, when the good ship was under their feet, and the mess-cans were filled with plenty of wholesome food.

Thanks to Captain Ravender's forethought in providing both boats with a coil of rope, we had our lashings, and the means of making what rigging was wanted, ready to hand. One of the oars was made fast

to the thwart, and well stayed fore and aft, for a mast. A large pilot coat that I wore was spread; enough of sail for us. The only difficulty that puzzled me was occasioned by the necessity of making a yard. The men tried to tear up one of the thwarts, but were not strong enough. My own knife had been broken in the attempt to split a bit of plank for them; and I was almost at my wit's end, when I luckily thought of searching the Captain's pockets for his knife. I found it—a fine large knife of Sheffield manufacture, with plenty of blades, and a small saw among them. With this we made a shift to saw off about a third of another oar; and then the difficulty was conquered; and we got my pilot-coat hoisted on our jury-mast, and rigged it as high as we could to the fashion of a lug-sail.

I had looked anxiously towards the Surf-boat, while we were rigging our mast, and observed, with a feeling of great relief, that the men in her—as soon as they discovered what we were about—were wise enough to follow our example. They got on faster than we did; being less put to it for room to turn round in. We set our sails as nearly as possible about the same time; and it was well for both boats that we finished our work when we did. At noon the wind began to rise again to a stiff breeze, which soon knocked up a heavy, tumbling sea. We drove before it in a direction North and by East, keeping wonderfully dry, considering all things. The mast stood well; and the sail, small as it was, did good service in steadying the boat and lifting her easily over the seas. I felt the cold after the loss of my coat, but not so badly as I had feared; for the two men who were with me in the stern sheets, sat as close as they could on either side of me, and helped with the warmth of their own bodies to keep the warmth in mine. Forward, I told off half-a-dozen of the most trustworthy of the men who could still muster strength enough to keep their eyes open, to set a watch, turn and turn about, on our frail rigging. The wind was steadily increasing, and if any accident happened to our mast, the chances were that the boat would broach-to, and that every one of us would go to the bottom.

So we drove on—all through that day—sometimes catching sight of the Surf-boat a little ahead of us—sometimes losing her altogether in the scud. How little and frail, how very different to the kind of boat that I had expected to see, she looked to my eyes now that I was out of her, and saw what she showed like on the waters for the first time! But to return to the Long-boat. The watch on the rigging was relieved every two hours, and at the same regular periods all the brightest eyes left amongst us looked out for the smallest vestige of a sail in view, and looked in vain. Among the passengers, nothing happened in the way of a change—except that

Miss Colshaw seemed to grow fainter, and that Mrs. Atherfield got restless, as if she were waking out of her long dream about the Golden Lucy.

It got on towards sunset. The wind was rising to half a gale. The clouds which had been heavy all over the firmament since noon, were lifting to the westward, and, leaving there, over the horizon line of the ocean, a long strip of clear pale greenish sky, overhung by a cloud-bank, whose ragged edges were tipped with burning crimson by the sun. I did not like the look of the night, and, keeping where I was, in the forward part of the boat, I helped the men to ease the strain off our mast, by lowering the yard a little and taking a pull on the sheet, so as to present to the wind a smaller surface even of our small sail. Noting the wild look of the weather, and the precautions we were taking against the chance of a gale rising in the night—and being, furthermore, as I believe, staggered in their minds by the death that had taken place among them—three of the passengers struggled up in the bottom of the boat, clasped their arms round me as if they were drowning men already, and hoarsely clamoured for a last drink of water, before the storm rose and sent us all to the bottom.

"Water you shall have," I said, "when I think the time has come to serve it out. The time has not come yet."

"Water, pray!" they all three groined together. Two more passengers who were asleep, woke up, and joined the cry.

"Silence!" I said. "There are not two spoonfuls of fresh water left for each man in the boat. I shall wait three hours more for the chance of rain before I serve that out. Silence, and drop back to your places!"

They let go of me, but clamoured weakly for water still; and, this time, the voices of some of the crew joined them. At this moment, to my great alarm (for I thought they were going mad and turning violent against me), I was seized round the neck by one of the men, who had been standing up, holding on by the mast, and looking out steadily to the westward.

I raised my right hand to free myself; but before I touched him, the sight of the man's face close to mine made me drop my arm again. There was a speechless, breathless, frantic joy in it, that made all the blood in my veins stand still in a moment.

"Out with it!" I said. "Men alive, out with it, for God's sake!"

His breath beat on my cheek in hot, quick, heavy gasps; but he could not utter a word. For a moment he let go of the mast (tightening his hold on me with the other arm) and pointed out westward—then slid heavily down on to the thwart behind us.

I looked westward, and saw that one of the two trustworthy men whom I had left at the helm was on his feet looking out westward, too. As the boat rose, I fixed my eyes

on the strip of clear greenish sky in the west, and on the bright line of the sea just under it. The boat dipped again before I could see anything. I squeezed my eyelids together to get the water out of them, and when we rose again looked straight into the middle of the bright sea-line. My heart bounded as if it would choke me—my tongue felt like a cinder in my mouth—my knees gave way under me—I dropped down on to the thwarts and sobbed out, with a great effort, as if I had been dumb for weeks before, and had only that instant found my speech:

"A sail! a sail!"

The words were instantly echoed by the man in the stern sheets.

"Sail, ho!" he screeches out, turning round on us, and swinging his arms about his head like a madman.

This made three of our company who had seen the ship already, and that one fact was sufficient to remove all dread lest our eyes might have been deceiving us. The great fear now was, not that we were deluded, but that we might come to some serious harm through the excess of joy among the people; that is to say, among such of the people as still had the sense to feel and the strength to express what they felt. I must record in my own justification, after confessing that I lost command over myself altogether on the discovery of the sail, that I was the first who set the example of self-control. I was in a manner forced to this by the crew frantically entreating me to lay-to until we could make out what course the ship was steering—a proceeding which, with the sea then running, with the heavy lading of the boat, and with such feeble substitutes for mast and sail as we possessed, must have been attended with total destruction to us all. I tried to remind the men of this, but they were in such a transport—hugging each other round the neck, and crying and laughing all in a breath—that they were not fit to listen to reason. Accordingly, I myself went to the helm again, and chose the steadiest of my two men in the after part of the boat, as a guard over the sheet, with instructions to use force, if necessary, towards any one who stretched out so much as a finger to it. The wind was rising every minute, and we had nothing for it but to scud, and be thankful to God's mercy that we had sea-room to do it in.

"It will be dark in an hour's time, sir," says the man left along with me when I took the helm again. "We have no light to show. The ship will pass us in the night. Lay-to, sir! For the love of Heaven, give us all a chance, and lay-to!" says he, and goes down on his knees before me, wringing his hands.

"Lay-to!" says I. "Lay-to, under a coat! Lay-to, in a boat like this, with the wind getting up to a gale! A seaman like you talk in that way! Who have I got along here with me? Sailors who know their craft

or a pack of long-shore lubbers, who ought to be turned adrift in a ferry-boat on a pond?" My heart was heavy enough, God knows, but I spoke out as loud as I could, in that light way, to try and shame the men back to their proper senses. I succeeded at least in restoring silence; and that was something in such a condition as ours.

My next anxiety was to know if the men in the Suff-Boat had sighted the sail to the westward. She was still driving a-head of us, and the first time I saw her rise on the waves, I made out a signal on board—a strip of cloth fastened to a boat-hook. I ordered the man by my side to return it with his jacket tied on to the end of an oar; being anxious to see whether his agitation had calmed down and left him fit for his duty again. He followed my directions steadily and when he had got his jacket on again, asked me to pardon him for losing his self-command in a quiet, altered voice.

I shook hands with him, and gave him the helm, in proof that my confidence was restored; then stood up and turned my face to the westward once again. I looked long into the belt of clear sky, which was narrowing already as the cloud-bank above sank over it. I looked with all my heart and soul and strength. It was only when my eyes could stand the strain on them no longer, that I gave in, and sat down again by the tiller. If I had not been supported by a firm trust in the mercy of Providence, which had preserved us thus far, I am afraid I should have abandoned myself at that trying time to downright hopeless, speechless despair.

It would not express much to any but seafaring readers if I mentioned the number of leagues off that I considered the ship to be. I shall give a better idea of the terrible distance there was between us, when I say that no landsman's eye could have made her out at all, and that none of us sailors could have seen her but for the bright opening in the sky, which made even a speck on the waters visible to a mariner's experienced sight all that weary way off. When I have said this, I have said enough to render it plain to every man's understanding that it was a sheer impossibility to make out what course the ship was steering, seeing that we had no chance of keeping her in view at that closing time of day for more than another half-hour, at most. There she was, astern to leeward of us; and here were we, driving for our lives before the wind, with any means of kindling a light that we might have possessed on leaving our ship wetted through long ago—with no guns to fire as signals of distress in the darkness—and with no choice, if the wind shifted, but still to stand in any direction in which it might please to drive us. Supposing, even at the best, that the ship was steering on our course, and would overhaul us in the night, what chance had we of making our position known

to her in the darkness? Truly, look at it anyhow we might from our poor mortal point of view, our prospect of deliverance seemed to be of the most utterly hopeless kind that it is possible to conceive.

The men felt this bitterly, as the cloud-bank dropped to the verge of the waters, and the sun set redly behind it. The moaning and lamenting among them was miserable to hear, when the last speck and phantom of the ship had vanished from view. Some few still swore they saw her when there was hardly a flicker of light left in the west, and only gave up looking out, and dropped down in the boat, at my express orders. I charged them all solemnly to set an example of courage to the passengers, and to trust the rest to the infinite wisdom and mercy of the Creator of us all. Some murmured, some fell to repeating scraps out of the Bible and Prayer-Book, some wandered again in their minds. This went on till the darkness gathered—then a great hush of silence fell drearily over passengers and crew; and the waves and the wind hissed and howled about us, as if we were tossing in the midst of them, a boat-load of corpses already!

Twice in the forepart of the night the clouds overhead parted for a little, and let the blessed moonlight down upon us. On the first of those occasions, I myself served out the last drops of fresh water we had left. The two women—poor suffering creatures!—were past drinking. Miss Coleshaw shivered a little when I moistened her lips with the water; and Mrs. Atherfield, when I did the same for her, drew her breath with a faint, fluttering sigh, which was just enough to show that she was not dead yet. The Captain still lay as he had lain ever since I got on board the boat. The others, both passengers and crew, managed for the most part to swallow their share of the water—the men being just sufficiently roused by it to get up on their knees, while the moonlight lasted, and look about wildly over the ocean for a chance of seeing the ship again. When the clouds gathered once more; they crouched back in their places with a long groan of despair. Hearing that, and dreading the effect of the pitchy darkness (to say nothing of the fierce wind and sea) on their sinking spirits, I resolved to combat their despondency, if it were still possible to contend against it, by giving them something to do. First telling them that no man could say at what time of the night the ship (in case she was steering our course) might forge ahead of us, or how near she might be when she passed, I recommended that all who had the strength should join their voices at regular intervals, and shout their loudest when the boat rose highest on the waves, on the chance of that cry of distress being borne by the wind with the hearing of the watch on board the ship. It is unnecessary to say that I knew well how near it was to an absolute impossibility that this

last feeble exertion on our parts could lead to any result. I only proposed it because I was driven to the end of my resources to keep up the faintest flicker of spirit among the men. They received my proposal with more warmth and readiness than I had ventured in their hopeless state, to expect from them. Up to the turn of midnight they resolutely raised their voices with me, at intervals of from five to ten minutes, whenever the boat was tossed highest on the waves. The wind seemed to whirl our weak cries savagely out of our mouths almost before we could utter them. I, sitting astern in the boat, only heard them, as it seemed, for something like an instant of time. But even that was enough to make me creep all over—the cry was so forlorn and fearful. Of all the dreadful sounds I had heard since the first striking of the ship, that shrill wail of despair—rising on the wave-tops, one moment; whirled away, the next, into the black night—was the most frightful that entered my ears. There are times, even now, when it seems to be ringing in them still.

Whether our first gleam of moonshine fell upon old Mr. Rarx, while he was sleeping, and helped to upset his weak brains altogether, is more than I can say. But, for some reason or other, before the clouds parted and let the light down on us for the second time, and while we were driving along awfully through the blackest of the night, he stirred in his place, and began rambling and raving again more vehemently than ever. To hear him now—that is to say, as well as I could hear him for the wind—he was still down in his gold-mine; but was laden so heavy with his precious metal that he could not get out, and was in mortal peril of being drowned by the water rising in the bottom of the shaft. So far, his maundering attracted my attention disagreeably, and did no more. But when he began—if I may say so—to take the name of the dear little dead child in vain, and to mix her up with himself and his miserly greed of gain, I got angry, and called to the men forward to give him a shake and make him hold his tongue. Whether any of them obeyed or not, I don't know—Mr. Rarx went on raving louder than ever. The shrill wind was now hardly more shrill than he. He swore he saw the white frock of our poor little lost pet fluttering in the daylight, at the top of the mine, and he screamed out to her in a great fright that the gold was heavy, and the water rising fast, and that she must come down quick as lightning if she meant to be in time to help him. I called again angrily to the men to silence him; and just as I did so, the clouds began to part for the second time, and the white tip of the moon grew visible.

"There she is!" screeches Mr. Rarx; and I saw him by the faint light, scramble on his knees in the bottom of the boat, and wave a ragged old handkerchief tip at the moon.

"Pull him down!" I called out. "Down with him; and tie his arms and legs!"

Of the men who could still move about, not one paid any attention to me. They were all upon their knees again, looking out in the strengthening moonlight for a sight of the ship.

"Quick, Golden Lucy!" screams Mr. Rarx, and creeps under the thwarts right forward into the bows of the boat. "Quick! my darling, my beauty, quick! The gold is heavy, and the water rises fast! Come down and save me, Golden Lucy! Let all the rest of the world drown, and save me! Me! me! me! me!"

He shouted these last words out at the top of his cracked, croaking voice, and got on his feet, as I conjectured (for the coat we had spread for a sail now hid him from me) in the bows of the boat. Not one of the crew so much as looked round at him, so eagerly were their eyes seeking for the ship. The man sitting by me was sunk in a deep sleep. If I had left the helm for a moment in that wind and sea, it would have been the death of every soul of us. I shouted desperately to the raving wretch to sit down. A screech that seemed to cut the very wind in two answered me. A huge wave tossed the boat's head up wildly at the same moment. I looked aside to leeward as the wash of the great roller swept by us, gleaming of a lurid, bluish white in the moonbeams; I looked and saw, in one second of time, the face of Mr. Rarx rush past on the wave, with the foam seething in his hair and the moon shining in his eyes. Before I could draw my breath he was a hundred yards astern of us, and the night and the sea had swallowed him up and had hid his secret, which he had kept all the voyage, from our mortal curiosity, for ever.

"He's gone! he's drowned!" I shouted to the men forward.

None of them took any notice; none of them left off looking out over the ocean for a sight of the ship. Nothing that I could say on the subject of our situation at that fearful time saw, in my opinion, give such an idea of the extremity and the frightfulness of it, as the relation of this one fact. I leave it to speak by itself the sad and shocking truth, and pass on gladly to the telling of what happened next, at a later hour of the night.

After the clouds had shut out the moon again, the wind dropped a little and shifted a point or two, so as to shape our course nearer to the eastward. How the hours passed after that, till the dawn came, is more than I can tell. The nearer the time of daylight approached the more completely everything seemed to drop out of my mind, except the one thought of where the ship we had seen in the evening might be, when we looked for her with the morning light.

It came at last—that grey, quiet light which was to end all our uncertainty; which

was to show us if we were saved, or to warn us if we were to prepare for death. With the first streak in the east, every one of the boat's company, except the sleeping and the senseless, roused up and looked out in breathless silence upon the sea. Slowly and slowly the daylight strengthened, and the darkness rolled off farther and farther before it over the face of the waters. The first pale flush of the sun flew trembling along the paths of light broken through the grey wastes of the eastern clouds. We could look clearly—we could see far; and there, ahead of us—O! merciful, bountiful providence of God!—there was the ship!

I have honestly owned the truth, and confessed to the human infirmity under suffering of myself, my passengers, and my crew. I have earned, therefore, as I would fain hope, the right to record it to the credit of all, that the men, the moment they set eyes on the ship, poured out their whole hearts in humble thanksgiving to the Divine Mercy which had saved them from the very jaws of death. They did not wait for me to bid them do this; they did it of their own accord, in their own language, fervently, earnestly, with one will and one heart.

We had hardly made the ship out—a fine brigantine, hoisting English colours—before we observed that her crew suddenly hove her up in the wind. At first we were at a loss to understand this; but as we drew nearer, we discovered that she was getting the Surf-boat (which had kept ahead of us all through the night) alongside of her, under the lee bow. My men tried to cheer when they saw their companions in safety, but their weak cries died away in tears and sobbing.

In another half hour we, too, were alongside of the brigantine.

From this point, I recollect nothing very distinctly. I remember faintly many loud voices and eager faces;—I remember fresh strong willing fellows, with a colour in their cheeks, and a smartness in their movements that seemed quite preternatural to me at that time, hanging over us in the rigging of the brigantine, and dropping down from her sides into our boat;—I remember trying with my feeble hands to help them in the difficult and perilous task of getting the two poor women and the Captain on board;—I remember one dark hairy giant of a man swearing that it was enough to break his heart, and catching me in his arms like a child—and from that moment I remember nothing more with the slightest certainty for over a week of time.

When I came to my own senses again, in my cot on board the brigantine my first inquiries were naturally for my fellow-sufferers. Two—a passenger in the Long-boat, and one of the crew of the Surf-boat—had sunk in spite of all the care that could be taken of them. The rest were likely, with time and attention, to recover. Of those

who have been particularly mentioned in this narrative, Mrs. Atherfield had shown signs of rallying the soonest; Miss Colshaw, who had held out longer against exhaustion, was now the slower to recover. Captain Ravender, though slowly mending, was still not able to speak or to move in his cot without help. The sacrifices for us all which this good man had so nobly undergone, not only in the boat, but before that, when he had deprived himself of his natural rest on the dark nights that preceded the wreck of the Golden Mary, had sadly undermined his natural strength of constitution. He, the heartiest of all, when we sailed from England, was now, through his unwearying devotion to his duty and to us, the last to recover, the longest to linger between life and death.

My next questions (when they helped me on deck to get my first blessed breath of fresh air) related to the vessel that had saved us. She was bound to the Columbia river—a long way to the northward of the port for which we had sailed in the Golden Mary. Most providentially for us, shortly after we had lost sight of the brigantine in the shades of the evening, she had been caught in a squall, and had sprung her foretopmast badly. This accident had obliged them to lay-to for some hours, while they did their best to secure the spar, and had warned them, when they continued on their course, to keep the ship under easy sail through the night. But for this circumstance we must, in all human probability, have been too far astern when the morning dawned, to have had the slightest chance of being discovered.

Excepting always some of the stoutest of our men, the next of the Long-boat's company who was helped on deck was Mrs. Atherfield. Poor soul! when she and I first looked at each other, I could see that her heart went back to the early days of our voyage, when the Golden Lucy and I used to have our game of hide-and-seek round the mast. She squeezed my hand as hard as she could with her wasted trembling fingers, and looked up piteously in my face, as if she would like to speak to little Lucy's playfellow, but dared not trust herself—then turned away quickly and laid her head against the bulwark, and looked out upon the desolate sea that was nothing to her now but her darling's grave. I was better pleased when I saw her later in the day, sitting by Captain Ravender's cot; for she seemed to take comfort in nursing him. Miss Colshaw soon afterwards got strong enough to relieve her at this duty; and, between them, they did the Captain such a world of good, both in body and spirit, that he also got strong enough before long to come on deck, and to thank me, in his old generous self-forgetful way, for having done my duty—the duty which I had learnt how to do by his example.

Hearing what our destination had been when we sailed from England, the captain of

the brigantine (who had treated us with the most unremitting attention and kindness, and had been warmly seconded in his efforts for our good by all the people under his command) volunteered to go sufficiently out of his course to enable us to speak the first Californian coasting-vessel sailing in the direction of San Francisco. We were lucky in meeting with one of these sooner than we expected. Three days after parting from the kind captain of the brigantine, we, the surviving passengers and crew of the Golden Mary, touched the firm ground once more, on the shores of California.

We were hardly collected here before we were obliged to separate again. Captain Ravender, though he was hardly yet in good travelling trim, accompanied Mrs. Atherfield inland, to see her safe under her husband's protection. Miss Coleshaw went with them, to stay with Mrs. Atherfield for a little while before she attempted to proceed with any matters of her own which had brought her to this part of the world. The rest of us, who were left behind with nothing particular to do until the Captain's return, followed the passengers to the gold diggings. Some few of us had enough of the life there in a very short time. The rest seemed bitten by old Mr. Rarr's mania for gold, and insisted on stopping behind when Rames and I proposed going back to the port. We two, and five of our steadiest seamen, were all the officers and crew left to meet the Captain on his return from the inland country.

He reported that he had left Mrs. Atherfield and Miss Coleshaw safe and comfortable under Mr. Atherfield's care. They sent affectionate messages to all of us, and especially (I am proud to say) to me. After hearing this good news, there seemed nothing better to do than to ship on board the first vessel bound for England. There were plenty in port, ready to sail, and only waiting for the men belonging to them who had deserted to the gold-diggings. We were all snapped up eagerly, and offered any rate we chose to set on our services, the moment we made known our readiness to ship for England—all, I ought to have said, except Captain Ravender, who went along with us in the capacity of passenger only.

Nothing of any moment occurred on the voyage back. The Captain and I got ashore at Gravesend safe and hearty, and went up to London as fast as the train could carry us, to report the calamity that had occurred to the owners of the Golden Mary. When that duty had been performed, Captain Ravender went back to his own house at Poplar, and I travelled to the West of England to report myself, to my old father and mother.

Here I might well end all these pages of writing; but I cannot refrain from adding a few more sentences, to tell the reader what I am sure he will be glad to hear. In the summer-time of this present year eighteen hundred and fifty-six, I happened to be at New York, and having spare time on my hands, and spare cash in my pocket, I walked into one of the biggest and grandest of their Ordinaries there, to have my dinner. I had hardly sat down at table, before who should I see opposite but Mrs. Atherfield, as bright-eyed and pretty as ever, with a gentleman on her right hand, and on her left—another Golden Lucy! Her hair was a shade or two darker than the hair of my poor little pet of past sad times; but in all other respects the living child reminded me so strongly of the dead, that I quite started at the first sight of her. I could not tell, if I was to try, how happy we were after dinner, or how much we had to say to each other. I was introduced to Mrs. Atherfield's husband, and heard from him, among other things, that Miss Coleshaw was married to her old sweetheart, who had fallen into misfortunes and errors, and whom she was determined to set right by giving him the great chance in life of getting a good wife. They were settled in America, like Mr. and Mrs. Atherfield—these last and the child being on their way, when I met them, to visit a friend living in the northernmost part of the States.

With the relation of this circumstance, and with my personal testimony to the good health and spirits of Captain Ravender the last time I saw him, ends all that I have to say in connection with the subject of the Wreck of the 'Golden Mary,' and the Great Deliverance of her People at Sea.

THE PERILS

OF

CERTAIN ENGLISH PRISONERS,

AND THEIR TREASURE

IN WOMEN, CHILDREN, SILVER, AND JEWELS.

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF **HOUSEHOLD WORDS.**
CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF ONE NUMBER AND A HALF.

CHRISTMAS, 1857.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ISLAND OF SILVER-STORE.

It was in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty-four, that I, Gill Davis to command, His Mark, having then the honor to be a private in the Royal Marines, stood a-leaning over the bulwarks of the armed sloop Christopher Columbus, in the South American waters off the Mosquito shore.

My lady remarks to me, before I go any further, that there is no such christian-name as Gill, and that her confident opinion is, that the name given to me in the baptism wherein I was made, &c., was Gilbert. She is certain to be right, but I never heard of it. I was a foundling child, picked up somewhere or another, and I always understood my christian-name to be Gill. It is true that I was called Gills when employed at Snorridge Bottom betwixt Chatham and Maidstone, to frighten birds; but that had nothing to do with the Baptism wherein I was made, &c., and wherein a number of things were promised for me by somebody, who let me alone ever afterwards as to performing any of them, and who, I consider, must have been the Beadle. Such name of Gills was entirely owing to my cheeks, or gills, which at that time of my life were of a raspy description.

My lady stops me again, before I go any further, by laughing exactly in her old way and waving the feather of her pen at me. That action on her part, calls to my mind as I look at her hand with the rings on it—Well! I won't! To be sure it will come in, in its own place. But it's always strange to me, noticing the quiet hand, and noticing it (as I have done, you know, so many times)

a-fondling children and grandchildren asleep, to think that when blood and honor were up—there! I won't! not at present!—Scratch it out.

She won't scratch it out, and quite honorable; because we have made an understanding that everything is to be taken down, and that nothing that is once taken down shall be scratched out. I have the great misfortune not to be able to read and write, and I am speaking my true and faithful account of those Adventures, and my lady is writing it, word for word.

I say, there I was, a-leaning over the bulwarks of the sloop Christopher Columbus in the South American waters off the Mosquito shore: a subject of his Gracious Majesty King George of England, and a private in the Royal Marines.

In those climates, you don't want to do much. I was doing nothing. I was thinking of the shepherd (my father, I wonder?) on the hill-sides by Snorridge Bottom, with a long staff, and with a rough white coat in all weathers all the year round, who used to let me lie in a corner of his hut by night, and who used to let me go about with him and his sheep by day when I could get nothing else to do, and who used to give me so little of his victuals and so much of his staff, that I ran away from him—which was what he wanted all along, I expect—to be knocked about the world in preference to Snorridge Bottom. I had been knocked about the world for nine-and-twenty years in all, when I stood looking along those bright blue South American waters. Looking after the shepherd, I may say. Watching him in a half-waking dream, with my eyes half-shut, as he, and his flock of sheep, and his two

dogs, seemed to move away from the ship's side, far away over the blue water, and go right down into the sky.

"It's rising out of the water, steady," a voice said close to me. I had been thinking on so, that it like woke me with a start, though it was no stranger voice than the voice of Harry Charker, my own comrade.

"What's rising out of the water, steady?" I asked my comrade.

"What?" says he. "The Island."

"O! The Island!" says I, turning my eyes towards it. "True. I forgot the Island."

"Forgot the port you're going to? That's odd, an't it?"

"It is odd," says I.

"And odd," he said, slowly considering with himself "an't even. Is it, Gill?"

He had always a remark just like that to make, and seldom another. As soon as he had brought a thing round to what it was not, he was satisfied. He was one of the best of men, and, in a certain sort of a way, one with the least to say for himself. I qualify it, because, besides being able to read and write like a Quarter-master, he had always one most excellent idea in his mind. That was, Duty. Upon my soul, I don't believe, though I admire learning beyond everything, that he could have got a better idea out of all the books in the world, if he had learnt them every word, and bear the cleverest of scholars.

My comrade and I had been quartered in Jamaica, and from there we had been drafted off to the British settlement of Belize, lying away West and North of the Mosquito coast. At Belize there had been great alarm of one cruel gang of pirates (there were always more pirates than enough in those Caribbean Seas), and as they got the better of our English cruisers by running into out-of-the-way creeks and shallows, and taking the land when they were hotly pressed, the governor of Belize had received orders from home to keep a sharp look-out for them along shore. Now, there was an armed sloop came once a-year from Port Royal, Jamaica, to the Island, laden with all manner of necessaries, to eat and to drink, and to wear, and to use in various ways; and it was aboard of that sloop which had touched at Belize, that I was a-standing, leaning over the bulwarks.

The Island was occupied by a very small English colony. It had been given the name of Silver-Store. The reason of its being so called, was, that the English colony owned and worked a silver mine over on the mainland, in Honduras, and used this island as a safe and convenient place to store their silver in, until it was annually fetched away by the sloop. It was brought down from the mine to the coast on the backs of mules, attended by friendly Indians and guarded by white men; from thence, it was conveyed over to

Silver-Store, when the weather was fair, in the canoes of that country; from Silver-Store, it was carried to Jamaica by the armed sloop once a-year, as I have already mentioned; from Jamaica it went, of course, all over the world.

How I came to be aboard the armed sloop, is easily told. Four-and-twenty marines under command of a lieutenant—that officer's name was Linderwood—had been told off at Belize, to proceed to Silver-Store, in aid of boats and seamen stationed there for the chase of the Pirates. The island was considered a good post of observation against the pirates, both by land and sea; neither the pirate ship nor yet her boats had been seen by any of us, but they had been so much heard of, that the reinforcement was sent. Of that party, I was one. It included a corporal and a serjeant. Charker was corporal, and the serjeant's name was Drooce. He was the most tyrannical non-commissioned officer in His Majesty's service.

The night came on, soon after I had had the foregoing words with Charker. All the wonderful bright colors went out of the sea and sky, in a few minutes, and all the stars in the Heavens seemed to shize out together, and to look down at themselves in the sea, over one another's shoulders, millions deep. Next morning, we cast anchor off the Island. There was a snug harbor within a little reef, there was a sandy beach; there were cocoa-nut trees with high straight stems, quite bare, and foliage at the top like plumes of magnificent green feathers; there were all the objects that are usually seen in those parts, and I am not going to describe them, having something else to tell about.

Great rejoicings, to be sure, were made on our arrival. All the flags in the place were hoisted, all the guns in the place were fired, and all the people in the place came down to look at us. One of those Sambo fellows—they call those natives Sambos, when they are half-negro and half-Indian—had come off outside the reef, to pilot us in, and remained on board after we had let go our anchor. He was called Christian George King, and was fonder of all hands than anybody else was. Now, I confess, for myself, that on that first day, if I had been captain of the Christopher Columbus, instead of private in the Royal Marines, I should have kicked Christian George King—who was no more a Christian, than he was a King, or a George—over the side, without exactly knowing why, except that it was the right thing to do.

But, I must likewise confess, that I was not in a particularly pleasant humor, when I stood under arms that morning, aboard the Christopher Columbus in the harbor of the Island of Silver-Store. I had had a hard life, and the life of the English on the Island seemed too easy and too gay, to please me. "Here you are," I thought to myself, "good

scholars and good livers; able to read what you like, able to write what you like, able to eat and drink what you like, and spend what you like, and do what you like; and much you care for a poor, ignorant private in the Royal Marines! Yet it's hard, too, I think, that you should have all the half-pence, and I all the kicks; you all the smooth, and I all the rough; you all the oil, and I all the vinegar." It was as envious a thing to think as might be, let alone its being nonsensical; but, I thought it. I took it so much amiss, that, when a very beautiful young English lady came aboard, I grunted to myself, "Ah! you have got a lover, I'll be bound!" As if there was any new offence to me in that, if she had!

She was sister to the captain of our sloop, who had been in a poor way for some time, and who was so ill then that he was obliged to be carried ashore. She was the child of a military officer, and had come out there with her sister, who was married to one of the owners of the silver-mine, and who had three children with her. It was easy to see that she was the light and spirit of the Island. After I had got a good look at her, I grunted to myself again, in an even worse state of mind than before, "I'll be damned, if I don't hate him, whoever he is!"

My officer, Lieutenant Linderwood, was as ill as the captain of the sloop, and was carried ashore, too. They were both young men of about my age, who had been delicate in the West India climate. I even took that, in bad part. I thought I was much fitter for the work than they were, and that if all of us had our deserts, I should be both of them rolled into one. (It may be imagined what sort of an officer of marines I should have made, without the power of reading a written order. And as to any knowledge how to command the sloop—Lord! I should have sunk her in a quarter of an hour!)

However, such were my reflections; and when we men were ashore and dismissed, I strolled about the place along with Charker, making my observations in a similar spirit.

It was a pretty place: in all its arrangements partly South American and partly English, and very agreeable to look at on that account, being like a bit of home that had got chipped off and had floated away to that spot, accommodating itself to circumstances as it drifted along. The huts of the Sambos, to the number of five-and-twenty, perhaps, were down by the beach to the left of the anchorage. On the right was a sort of barrack, with a South American Flag and the Union Jack, flying from the same staff, where the little English colony could all come together, if they saw occasion. It was a walled square of building, with a sort of pleasure-ground inside, and inside that again a sunken block like a powder magazine, with a little square trench round it, and

steps down to the door. Charker and I were looking in at the gate, which was not guarded; and I had said to Charker, in reference to the bit like a powder magazine, "that's where they keep the silver you see;" and Charker had said to me, after thinking it over, "And silver an't gold. Is it, Gill?" when the beautiful young English lady I had been so bilious about, looked out of a door, or a window—at all events looked out, from under a bright awning. She no sooner saw us two in uniform, than she came out so quickly that she was still putting on her broad Mexican hat of plaited straw when we saluted.

"Would you like to come in," she said, "and see the place? It is rather a curious place."

We thanked the young lady, and said we didn't wish to be troublesome; but, she said it could be no trouble to an English soldier's daughter, to show English soldiers how their countrymen and countrywomen fared, so far away from England; and consequently we saluted again, and went in. Then, as we stood in the shade, she showed us (being as affable as beautiful), how the different families lived in their separate houses, and how there was a general house for stores, and a general reading-room, and a general room for music and dancing, and a room for Church; and how there were other houses on the rising-ground called the Signal Hill, where they lived in the hotter weather.

"Your officer has been carried up there," she said, "and my brother, too, for the better air. At present, our few residents are dispersed over both spots: deducting, that is to say, such of our number as are always going to, or coming from, or staying at, the Mine." ("He is among one of those parties," I thought, "and I wish somebody would knock his head off.")

"Some of our married ladies live here," she said, "during at least half the year, as lonely as widows, with their children."

"Many children here, ma'am?"

"Seventeen. There are thirteen married ladies, and there are eight like me."

There were not eight like her—there was not one like her—in the world. She meant, single.

"Which, with about thirty Englishmen of various degrees," said the young lady, "form the little colony now on the Island. I don't count the sailors, for they don't belong to us. Nor the soldiers," she gave us a gracious smile when she spoke of the soldiers, "for the same reason."

"Nor the Sambos, ma'am," said I.

"No."

"Under your favor, and with your leave, ma'am," said I, "are they trustworthy?"

"Perfectly! We are all very kind to them, and they are very grateful to us."

"Indeed, ma'am? Now—Christian George King?"

"Very much attached to us all. Would die for us."

She was, as in my uneducated way I have observed very beautiful women almost always to be, so composed, that her composure gave great weight to what she said, and I believed it.

Then, she pointed out to us the building like a powder magazine, and explained to us in what manner the silver was brought from the mine, and was brought over from the mainland, and was stored there. The Christopher Columbus would have a rich lading, she said, for there had been a great yield that year, a much richer yield than usual, and there was a chest of jewels besides the silver.

When we had looked about us, and were getting sheepish, through fearing we were troublesome, she turned us over to a young woman, English born but West India bred, who served her as her maid. This young woman was the widow of a non-commissioned officer in a regiment of the line. She had got married and widowed at St. Vincent, with only a few months between the two events. She was a little saucy woman, with a bright pair of eyes, rather a neat little foot and figure, and rather a neat little turned-up nose. The sort of young woman, I considered at the time, who appeared to invite you to give her a kiss, and who would have slapped your face if you accepted the invitation.

I couldn't make out her name at first; for, when she gave it in answer to my inquiry, it sounded like Beltot, which didn't sound right. But, when we became better acquainted—which was while Charker and I were drinking sugar-cane sangaree, which she made in a most excellent manner—I found that her Christian name was Isabella, which they shortened into Bell, and that the name of the deceased non-commissioned officer was Tott. Being the kind of neat little woman it was natural to make a toy of,—I never saw a woman so like a toy in my life—she had got the plaything name of Beiltott. In short, she had no other name on the island. Even Mr. Commissioner Fordage (and he was a grave one!) formally addressed her as Mrs. Beiltott. But, I shall come to Mr. Commissioner Fordage presently.

The name of the captain of the sloop was Captain Maryon, and therefore it was no news to hear from Mrs. Beiltott, that his sister, the beautiful unmarried young English lady, was Miss Maryon. The novelty was, that her Christian name was Marion too. Marion Maryon. Many a time I have run off those two names in my thoughts, like a bit of verse. O many, and many, and many, a time!

We saw out all the drink that was produced, like good men and true, and then took our leaves, and went down to the beach. The weather was beautiful; the wind steady, low, and gentle; the island, a picture; the sea, a picture; the sky, a picture. In that country

there are two rainy seasons in the year. One sets in at about our English Midsummer; the other, about a fortnight after our English Michaelmas. It was the beginning of August at that time; the first of these rainy seasons was well over; and everything was in its most beautiful growth, and had its loveliest look upon it.

"They enjoy themselves here," I says to Charker, turning surly again. "This is better than private-soldiering."

We had come down to the beach, to be friendly with the boat's-crew who were camped and hutted there; and we were approaching towards their quarters over the sand, when Christian George King comes up from the landing-place at a wolf's-trot, crying, "Yup, So-Jeer!"—which was that Sambo Pilot's barbarous way of saying, Hallo, Soldier! I have stated myself to be a man of no learning, and, if I entertain prejudices, I hope allowance may be made. I will now confess to one. It may be a right one or it may be a wrong one; but, I never did like Natives, except in the form of oysters.

So, when Christian George King, who was individually unpleasant to me besides, comes a trotting along the sand, clucking "Yup, So-Jeer!" I had a thundering good mind to let fly at him with my right. I certainly should have done it, but that it would have exposed me to reprimand.

"Yup, So-Jeer!" says he. "Bad job."

"What do you mean?" says I.

"Yup, So-Jeer!" says he, "Ship Leakee."

"Ship leaky?" says I.

"Iss," says he, with a nod that looked as if it was jerked out of him by a most violent hiccup—which is the way with those savages.

I cast my eyes at Charker, and we both heard the pumps going aboard the sloop, and saw the signal run up, "Come on board; hands wanted from the shore." In no time some of the sloop's liberty-men were already running down to the water's edge, and the party of seamen, under orders against the Pirates, were putting off to the Columbus in two boats.

"Oh Christian George King sar berry sorry!" says that Sambo vagabond, then. "Christian George King cry, English fashion!" His English fashion of crying was to screw his black knuckles into his eyes, howl like a dog, and roll himself on his back on the sand. It was trying not to kick him, but I gave Charker the word, "Double-quick, Harry!" and we got down to the water's edge, and got on board the sloop.

By some means or other, she had sprung such a leak, that no pumping would keep her free; and what between the two fears that she would go down in the harbor, and that, even if she did not, all the supplies she had brought for the little colony would be destroyed by the sea-water as it rose in her, there was great confusion. In the midst of it, Captain Maryon was heard hailing from the beach,

He had been carried down in his hammock, and looked very bad; but, he insisted on being stood there on his feet; and I saw him, myself, come off in the boat, sitting upright in the stern-sheets, as if nothing was wrong with him.

A quick sort of council was held, and Captain Maryon soon resolved that we must all fall to work to get the cargo out, and, that when that was done, the guns and heavy matters must be got out, and that the sloop must be hauled ashore, and careened, and the leak stopped. We were all mustered (the Pirate-Chace party volunteering), and told off into parties, with so many hours of spell and so many hours of relief, and we all went at it with a will. Christian George King was entered one of the party in which I worked, at his own request, and he went at it with as good a will as any of the rest. He went at it with so much heartiness, to say the truth, that he rose in my good opinion, almost as fast as the water rose in the ship. Which was fast enough, and faster.

Mr. Commissioner Pordage kept in a red and black japanned box, like a family lump-sugar-box, some document or other which some Sambo chief or other had got drunk and spilt some ink over (as well as I could understand the matter), and by that means had given up lawful possession of the Island. Through having hold of this box, Mr. Pordage got his title of Commissioner. He was styled Consul, too, and spoke of himself as "Government."

He was a stiff-jointed, high-nosed old gentleman, without an ounce of fat on him, of a very angry temper and a very yellow complexion. Mrs. Commissioner Pordage, making allowance for difference of sex, was much the same. Mr. Kitten, a small, youngish, bald, botanical and mineralogical gentleman, also connected with the mine—but everybody there was that, more or less—was sometimes called by Mr. Commissioner Pordage, his Vice-commissioner, and sometimes his Deputy-consul. Or sometimes he spoke of Mr. Kitten, merely as being "under Government."

The beach was beginning to be a lively scene with the preparations for careening the sloop, and, with cargo, and spars, and rigging, and water-casks, dotted about it, and with temporary quarters for the men rising up there out of such sails and odds and ends as could be beat set on one side to make them, when Mr. Commissioner Pordage comes down in a high fluster, and asks for Captain Maryon. The Captain, ill as he was, was slung in his hammock betwixt two trees, that he might direct; and he raised his head, and answered for himself.

"Captain Maryon," cries Mr. Commissioner Pordage, "this is not official. This is not regular."

"Sir," says the Captain, "it hath been arranged with the clerk and supercargo,

that you should be communicated with, and requested to render any little assistance that may lie in your power. I am quite certain that hath been duly done."

"Captain Maryon," replies Mr. Commissioner Pordage, "there hath been no written correspondence. No documents have passed, no memoranda have been made, no minutes have been made, no entries and counter-entries appear in the official munimenta. This is indecent. I call upon you, sir, to desist, until all is regular, or Government will take this up."

"Sir," says Captain Maryon, chafing a little, as he looked out of his hammock; "between the chances of Government taking this up, and my ship taking herself down, I much prefer to trust myself to the former."

"You do, sir!" cries Mr. Commissioner Pordage.

"I do, sir," says Captain Maryon, lying down again.

"Then, Mr. Kitten," says the Commissioner, "send up instantly for my Diplomatic coat."

He was dressed in a linen suit at that moment; but, Mr. Kitten started off himself and brought down the Diplomatic coat, which was a blue cloth one, gold-laced, and with a crown on the button.

"Now, Mr. Kitten," says Pordage, "I instruct you, as Vice-commissioner, and Deputy-consul of this place, to demand of Captain Maryon, of the sloop Christopher Columbus, whether he drives me to the act of putting this coat on?"

"Mr. Pordage," says Captain Maryon, looking out of his hammock again, "as I can hear what you say, I can answer it without troubling the gentleman. I should be sorry that you should be at the pains of putting on too hot a coat on my account; but, otherwise, you may put it on hind-side before, or inside-out, or with your legs in the sleeves, or your head in the skirts, for any objection that I have to offer to your thoroughly pleasing yourself."

"Very good, Captain Maryon," says Pordage, in a tremendous passion. "Very good, sir. Be the consequences on your own head! Mr. Kitten, as it has come to this, help me on with it."

When he had given that order, he walked off in the coat, and all our names were taken, and I was afterwards told that Mr. Kitten wrote from his dictation more than a bushel of large paper on the subject, which cost more before it was done with, than ever could be calculated, and which only got done with after all, by being lost.

Our work went on merrily, nevertheless, and the Christopher Columbus, hauled up, lay helpless on her side like a great fish out of water. While she was in that state, there was a feast, or a ball, or an entertainment, or more properly all three together, given in honor of the ship, and the ship's company, and the other visitors. At that assembly, I believe, I saw all the inhabitants then upon

the Island, without any exception. I took no particular notice of more than a few, but I found it very agreeable in that little corner of the world to see the children, who were of all ages, and mostly very pretty—as they mostly are. There was one handsome elderly lady, with very dark eyes and grey hair, that I inquired about. I was told that her name was Mrs. Venning; and her married daughter, a fair slight thing, was pointed out to me by the name of Fanny Fisher. Quite a child she looked, with a little copy of herself holding to her dress; and her husband, just come back from the mine, exceeding proud of her. They were a good-looking set of people on the whole, but I didn't like them. I was out of sorts; in conversation with Charker, I found fault with all of them. I said of Mrs. Venning, she was proud; of Mrs. Fisher, she was a delicate little baby-fool. What did I think of this one? Why, he was a fine gentleman. What did I say to that one? Why, she was a fine lady. What could you expect them to be (I asked Charker), nursed in that climate, with the tropical night shining for them, musical instruments playing to them, great trees bending over them, soft lamps lighting them, fire-flies sparkling in among them, bright flowers and birds brought into existence to please their eyes, delicious drinks to be had for the pouring out, delicious fruits to be got for the picking, and every one dancing and murmuring happily in the scented air, with the sea breaking low on the reef for a pleasant chorus.

"Fine gentlemen and fine ladies, Harry?" I says to Charker. "Yes, I think so! Dolls! Dolls! Not the sort of stuff for wear, that comes of poor private soldiering in the Royal Marines!"

However, I could not gainsay that they were very hospitable people, and that they treated us uncommonly well. Every man of us was at the entertainment, and Mrs. Bell-tott had more partners than she could dance with: though she danced all night, too. As to Jack (whether of the Christopher Columbus, or of the Pirate pursuit party, it made no difference), he danced with his brother Jack, danced with himself, danced with the moon, the stars, the trees, the prospect, anything. I didn't greatly take to the chief-officer of that party, with his bright eyes, brown face, and easy figure. I didn't much like his way when he first happened to come where we were, with Miss Maryon on his arm. "Oh, Captain Carton," she says, "here are two friends of mine!" He says, "Indeed? These two Marines?"—meaning Charker and self. "Yes," says she, "I showed these two friends of mine when they first came, all the wonders of Silver-Store." He gave us a laughing look, and says he, "You are in luck, men. I would be disrated and go before the mast to-morrow, to be shown the way upward again, by such a guide. You are in luck,

men." When we had saluted, and he and the young lady had waltzed away, I said, "You are a pretty fellow, too, to talk of luck. You may go to the Devil!"

Mr. Commissioner Portage and Mrs. Commissioner, showed among the company on that occasion like the King and Queen of a much Greater Britain than Great Britain. Only two other circumstances in that jovial night made much separate impression on me. One was this. A man in our draft of marines, named Tom Packer, a wild unsteady young fellow, but the son of a respectable shipwright in Portsmouth Yard, and a good scholar who had been well brought up, comes to me after a spell of dancing, and takes me aside by the elbow, and says, swearing angrily:

"Gill Davis, I hope I may not be the death of Serjeant Drooce one day!"

Now, I knew Drooce always had borne particularly hard on this man, and I knew this man to be of a very hot temper: so, I said:

"Tut, nonsense! don't talk so to me! If there's a man in the corps who scorns the name of an assassin, that man and Tom Packer are one."

Tom wipes his head, being in a mortal sweat, and says he:

"I hope so, but I can't answer for myself when he lords it over me, as he has just now done, before a woman. I tell you what, Gill! Mark my words! It will go hard with Serjeant Drooce, if ever we are in an engagement together, and he has to look to me to save him. Let him say a prayer then, if he knows one, for it's all over with him, and he is on his Death-bed. Mark my words!"

I did mark his words, and very soon afterwards, too, as will shortly be taken down.

The other circumstance that I noticed at that ball, was, the gaiety and attachment of Christian George King. The innocent spirits that Sambo Pilot was in, and the impossibility he found himself under of showing all the little colony, but especially the ladies and children, how fond he was of them, how devoted to them, and how faithful to them for life and death, for present, future, and everlasting, made a great impression on me. If ever a man, Sambo or no, Sambo, was trustful and trusted, to what may be called quite an infantine and sweetly beautiful extent, surely, I thought that morning when I did at last lie down to rest, it was that Sambo Pilot, Christian George King.

This may account for my dreaming of him. He stuck in my sleep, cornerwise, and I couldn't get him out. He was always flitting about me, dancing round me, and peeping in over my hammock, though I woke and dozed off again fifty times. At last, when I opened my eyes, there he really was, looking in at the open side of the little dark hut; which was made of leaves, and had Charker's hammock slung in it as well as mine.

"So-Jeer!" says he, in a sort of a low croak. "Yup!"

"Hallo!" says I, starting up. "What? You *are* there, are you?"

"Iss," says he. "Christian George King got news."

"What news has he got?"

"Pirates out!"

I was on my feet in a second. So was Charker. We were both aware that Captain Carton, in command of the boats, constantly watched the main land for a secret signal, though, of course, it was not known to such as us what the signal was.

Christian George King had vanished before we touched the ground. But, the word was already passing from hut to hut to turn out quietly, and we knew that the nimble barbarian had got hold of the truth, or something near it.

In a space among the trees behind the encampment of us visitors, naval and military, was a snugly-screened spot, where we kept the stores that were in use, and did our cookery. The word was passed to assemble here. It was very quickly given, and was given (so far as we were concerned) by Serjeant Drooce, who was as good in a soldier point of view, as he was bad in a tyrannical one. We were ordered to drop into this space, quietly, behind the trees, one by one. As we assembled here, the seamen assembled too. Within ten minutes, as I should estimate, we were all here, except the usual guard upon the beach. The beach (we could see it through the wood) looked as it always had done in the hottest time of the day. The guard were in the shadow of the sloop's hull, and nothing was moving but the sea, and that moved very faintly. Work had always been knocked off at that hour, until the sun grew less fierce, and the sea-breeze rose; so that its being holiday with us, made no difference, just then, in the look of the place. But, I may mention that it was a holiday, and the first we had had since our hard work began. Last night's ball had been given, on the leak's being repaired, and the careening done. The worst of the work was over, and to-morrow we were to begin to get the sloop afloat again.

We marines were now drawn up here, under arms. The chace-party were drawn up separate. The men of the Columbus were drawn up separate. The officers stepped out into the midst of the three parties, and spoke so as all might hear. Captain Carton was the officer in command, and he had a spy-glass in his hand. His coxswain stood by him with another spy-glass, and with a slate on which he seemed to have been taking down signals.

"Now, men!" says Captain Carton; "I have to let you know, for your satisfaction: Firstly, that there are ten pirate-boats, strongly-manned and armed, lying hidden up a creek yonder, on the coast, under the overhanging branches

of the dense trees. Secondly, that they will certainly come out this night when the moon rises, on a pillaging and murdering expedition, of which some part of the main land is the object. Thirdly—don't cheer, men!—that we will give chase, and, if we can get at them, rid the world of them, please God!"

Nobody spoke, that I heard, and nobody moved, that I saw. Yet there was a kind of ring, as if every man answered and approved with the best blood that was inside of him.

"Sir," says Captain Maryon, "I beg to volunteer on this service, with my boats. My people volunteer, to the ship's boys."

"In His Majesty's name and service," the other answers, touching his hat, "I accept your aid with pleasure. Lieutenant Linderwood, how will you divide your men?"

I was ashamed—I give it out to be written down as large and plain as possible—I was heart and soul ashamed of my thoughts of those two sick officers, Captain Maryon and Lieutenant Linderwood, when I saw them, then and there. The spirit in those two gentlemen beat down their illness (and very ill I knew them to be) like Saint George beating down the Dragon. Pain and weakness, want of ease and want of rest, had no more place in their minds than fear itself. Meaning now to express for my lady to write down, exactly what I felt then and there, I felt this: "You two brave fellows that I have been so grudgeful of, I know that if you were dying you would put it off to get up and do your best, and then you would be so modest that in lying down again to die, you would hardly say, 'I did it!'"

It did me good. It really did me good.

But, to go back to where I broke off. Says Captain Carton to Lieutenant Linderwood, "Sir, how will you divide your men? There is not room for all; and a few men should, in any case, be left here."

There was some debate about it. At last, it was resolved to leave eight Marines and four seamen on the Island, besides the sloop's two boys. And because it was considered that the friendly Sambos would only want to be commanded in case of any danger (though none at all was apprehended there), the officers were in favour of leaving the two non-commissioned officers, Drooce and Charker. It was a heavy disappointment to them, just as my being one of the left was a heavy disappointment to me—then, but not soon afterwards. We men drew lots for it, and I drew "Island." So did Tom Packer. So, of course, did four more of our rask and file.

When this was settled, verbal instructions were given to all hands to keep the intended expedition secret, in order that the women and children might not be alarmed, or the expedition put in a difficulty by mere volunteers. The assembly was to be at that same spot, at sunset. Every man was to keep

up an appearance, meanwhile, of occupying himself in his usual way. That is to say, every man excepting four old trusty seamen, who were appointed, with an officer, to see to the arms and ammunition, and to muffle the rullocks of the boats, and to make everything as trim and swift and silent as it could be made.

The Sambo Pilot had been present all the while, in case of his being wanted, and had said to the officer in command, five hundred times over it he had said it once, that Christian George King would stay with the So-Jeers, and take care of the booffer ladies and the booffer child—booffer, being that native's expression for beautiful. He was now asked a few questions concerning the putting off of the boats, and in particular whether there was any way of embarking at the back of the Island: which Captain Carton would have half liked to do, and then have dropped round in its shadow and slanted across to the main. But, "No," says Christian George King. "No, no, no! Told you so, ten time. No, no, no! All reef, all rock, all swim, all drown!" Striking out as he said it, like a swimmer gone mad, and turning over on his back on dry land, and spluttering himself to death, in a manner that made him quite an exhibition.

The sun went down, after appearing to be a long time about it, and the assembly was called. Every man answered to his name, of course, and was at his post. It was not yet black dark, and the roll was only just gone through, when up comes Mr. Commissioner Pordage with his Diplomatic coat on.

"Captain Carton," says he, "Sir, what is this?"

"This, Mr. Commissioner," (he was very short with him) "is an expedition against the Pirates. It is a secret expedition, so please to keep it a secret."

"Sir," says Commissioner Pordage, "I trust there is going to be no unnecessary cruelty committed?"

"Sir," returns the officer, "I trust not."

"That is not enough, sir," cries Commissioner Pordage, getting wroth. "Captain Carton, I give you notice. Government requires you to treat the enemy with great delicacy, consideration, clemency, and forbearance."

"Sir," says Captain Carton, "I am an English Officer, commanding English Men, and I hope I am not likely to disappoint the Government's just expectations. But, I presume you know that these villains under their black flag have despoiled our countrymen of their property, burnt their homes, barbarously murdered them and their little children, and worse than murdered their wives and daughters!"

"Perhaps I do, Captain Carton," answers Pordage, waving his hand, with dignity; "perhaps I do not. It is not customary, sir, for Government to commit itself."

"It matters very little, Mr. Pordage,

whether or no. Believing that I hold my commission by the allowance of God, and not that I have received it direct from the Devil, I shall certainly use it, with all avoidance of unnecessary suffering and with all merciful swiftness of execution, to exterminate these people from the face of the earth. Let me recommend you to go home, sir, and to keep out of the night-air."

Never another syllable did that officer say to the Commissioner, but turned away to his men. The Commissioner buttoned his Diplomatic coat to the chin, said, "Mr. Kitten, attend me!" gasped, half choked himself, and took himself off.

It now fell very dark, indeed. I have seldom, if ever, seen it darker, nor yet so dark. The moon was not due until one in the morning, and it was but a little after nine when our men lay down where they were mustered. It was pretended that they were to take a nap, but everybody knew that no nap was to be got under the circumstances. Though all were very quiet, there was a restlessness among the people; much what I have seen among the people on a race-course, when the bell has rung for the saddling for a great race with large stakes on it.

At ten, they put off; only one boat putting off at a time; another following in five minutes; both then lying on their oars until another followed. Ahead of all, paddling his own outlandish little canoe without a sound, went the Sambo pilot, to take them safely outside the reef. No light was shown but once, and that was in the commanding officer's own hand. I lighted the dark lantern for him, and he took it from me when he embarked. They had blue lights and such like with them, but kept themselves as dark as Murder.

The expedition got away with wonderful quietness, and Christian George King soon came back, dancing with joy.

"Yup, So-Jeer," says he to myself in a very objectionable kind of convulsions, "Christian George King sar berry glad. Pirates all be blown a-pieces. Yup! Yup!"

My reply to that cannibal was, "However glad you may be, hold your noise, and don't dance jigs and slap your knees about it, for I can't abear to see you do it."

I was on duty then; we twelve who were left, being divided into four watches of three each, three hours' spell. I was relieved at twelve. A little before that time, I had challenged, and Miss Maryon and Mrs. Belltott had come in.

"Good Davis," says Miss Maryon, "what is the matter? Where is my brother?"

I told her what was the matter, and where her brother was.

"O Heaven help him!" says she, clasping her hands and looking up—she was close in front of me, and she looked most lovely to be sure; "he is not sufficiently recovered, not strong enough, for such strife!"

"If you had seen him, miss," I told her, "as I saw him when he volunteered, you would have known that his spirit is strong enough for any strife. It will bear his body, miss, to wherever duty calls him. It will always bear him to an honorable life, or a brave death."

"Heaven bless you!" says she, touching my arm. "I know it. Heaven bless you!"

Mrs. Belltott surprised me by trembling and saying nothing. They were still standing looking towards the sea and listening, after the relief had come round. It continuing very dark, I asked to be allowed to take them back. Miss Maryon thanked me, and she put her arm in mine, and I did take them back. I have now got to make a confession that will appear singular. After I had left them, I laid myself down on my face on the beach, and cried, for the first time since I had frightened birds as a boy at Snorridge Bottom, to think what a poor, ignorant, low-placed, private soldier I was.

It was only for half a minute or so. A man can't at all times be quite master of himself, and it was only for half a minute or so. Then I up and went to my hut, and turned into my hammock, and fell asleep with wet eyelashes, and a sore, sore heart. Just as I had often done when I was a child, and had been worse used than usual.

I slept (as a child under those circumstances might) very sound, and yet very sore at heart all through my sleep. I was awoke by the words, "He is a determined man." I had sprung out of my hammock, and had seized my firelock, and was standing on the ground, saying the words myself. "He is a determined man." But, the curiosity of my state was, that I seemed to be repeating them after somebody, and to have been wonderfully startled by hearing them.

As soon as I came to myself, I went out of the hut, and away to where the guard was. Charker challenged: "Who goes there?" "A friend." "Not Gill?" says he, as he shouldered his piece. "Gill," says I. "Why, what the deuce do you do out of your hammock?" says he. "Too hot for sleep," says I; "is all right?" "Right!" says Charker, "yes, yes; all's right enough here; what should be wrong here? It's the boats that we want to know of. Except for fire-fies twinkling about, and the lonesome splashes of great creatures as they drop into the water, there's nothing going on here to ease a man's mind from the boats."

The moon was above the sea, and had risen, I should say, some half-an-hour. As Charker spoke, with his face towards the sea, I, looking landward, suddenly laid my right hand on his breast, and said, "Don't move. Don't turn. Don't raise your voice! You never saw a Maltese face here?"

"No. What do you mean?" he asks, staring at me.

"Nor yet an English face, with one eye and a patch across the nose?"

"No. What ails you? What do you mean?"

I had seen both, looking at us round the stem of a cocoa-nut tree, where the moon struck them. I had seen that Sambo Pilot, with one hand laid on the stem of the tree, drawing them back into the heavy shadow. I had seen their naked cutlasses twinkle and shine, like bits of the moonshine in the water that had got blown ashore among the trees by the light wind. I had seen it all, in a moment. And I saw in a moment (as any man would), that the signalled move of the pirates on the main-land was a plot and a feint: that the leak had been made to disable the sloop; that the boats had been tempted away, to leave the Island unprotected; that the pirates had landed by some secreted way at the back; and that Christian George King was a double-dyed traitor, and a most infernal villain.

I considered, still all in one and the same moment, that Charker was a brave man, but not quick with his head; and that Serjeant Drooce, with a much better head, was close by. All I said to Charker was, "I am afraid we are betrayed. Turn your back full to the moonlight on the sea, and cover the stem of the cocoa-nut tree which will then be right before you, at the height of a man's heart. Are you right?"

"I am right," says Charker, turning instantly, and falling into the position with a nerve of iron; "and right a'n't left. Is it Gill?"

A few seconds brought me to Serjeant Drooce's hut. He was fast asleep, and being a heavy sleeper, I had to lay my hand upon him to rouse him. The instant I touched him he came rolling out of his hammock, and upon me like a tiger. And a tiger he was, except that he knew what he was up to, in his utmost heat, as well as any man.

I had to struggle with him pretty hard to bring him to his senses, panting all the while (for he gave me a breather), "Serjeant, I am Gill Davis! Treachery! Pirates on the Island!"

The last words brought him round, and he took his hands off. "I have seen two of them within this minute," said I. And so I told him what I had told Harry Charker.

His soldierly, though tyrannical, head was clear in an instant. He didn't waste one word, even of surprise. "Order the guard," says he, "so draw off quietly into the Fort." (They called the enclosure I have before mentioned, the Fort, though it was not much of that.) "Then get you to the Fort as quick as you can, rouse up every soul there, and fasten the gate. I will bring in all those who are up at the Signal Hill. If we are surrounded before we can join you, you must make a sally and cut us out if you can. The word among our men is, 'Women and children!'"

He burst away, like fire going before the wind over dry reeds. He roused up the seven men who were off duty, and had them hursting away with him, before they knew they were not asleep. I reported orders to Charker, and ran to the Fort, as I have never run at any other time in all my life: no, not even in a dream.

The gate was not fast, and had no good fastening: only a double wooden bar, a poor chain, and a bad lock. Those, I secured as well as they could be secured in a few seconds by one pair of hands, and so ran to that part of the building where Miss Maryon lived. I called to her loudly by her name until she answered. I then called loudly all the names I knew—Mrs. Macey (Miss Maryon's married sister), Mr. Macey, Mrs. Venning, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, even Mr. and Mrs. Pordage. Then I called out, "All you gentlemen here, get up and defend the place! We are caught in a trap. Pirates have landed. We are attacked!"

At the terrible word "Pirates!"—for, those villains had done such deeds in those seas as never can be told in writing, and can scarcely be so much as thought of—cries and screams rose up from every part of the place. Quickly, lights moved about from window to window, and the cries moved about with them, and men, women and children came flying down into the square. I remarked to myself, even then, what a number of things I seemed to see at once. I noticed Mrs. Macey coming towards me, carrying all her three children together. I noticed Mr. Pordage, in the greatest terror, in vain trying to get on his Diplomatic coat; and Mr. Kitten respectfully tying his pocket-handkerchief over Mrs. Pordage's nightcap. I noticed Mrs. Belltott run out screaming, and shrink upon the ground near me, and cover her face in her hands, and lie, all of a bundle, shivering. But, what I noticed with the greatest pleasure was, the determined eyes with which those men of the Mine that I had thought fine gentlemen, came round me with what arms they had: to the full as cool and resolute as I could be, for my life—aye, and for my soul, too, into the bargain!

The chief person being Mr. Macey, I told him how the three men of the guard would be at the gate directly, if they were not already there, and how Serjeant Drooce and the other seven were gone to bring in the outlying part of the people of Silver-store. I next urged him, for the love all who were dear to him, to trust no Sambo, and, above all, if he could get any good chance at Christian George King, not to lose it, but to put him out of the world. "I will follow your advice to the letter, Davis," says he; "what next?" My answer was, "I think, sir, I would recommend you next, to order down such heavy furniture and lumber as can be moved, and make a barricade within the gate". "That's good again," says he: "will

you see it done?" "I'll willingly help to do it," says I, "unless or until my superior, Serjeant Drooce, gives me other orders." He shook me by the hand, and having told off some of his companions to help me, bestirred himself to look to the arms and ammunition. A proper quick, brave, steady, ready gentleman!

One of their three little children was deaf and dumb. Miss Maryon had been from the first with all the children, soothing them, and dressing them (poor little things, they had been brought out of their beds), and making them believe that it was a game of play, so that some of them were now even laughing. I had been working hard with the others at the barricade, and had got up a pretty good breastwork within the gate. Drooce and the seven had come back, bringing in the people from the Signal Hill, and had worked along with us: but, I had not so much as spoken a word to Drooce, nor had Drooce so much as spoken a word to me, for we were both too busy. The breastwork was now finished, and I found Miss Maryon at my side, with a child in her arms. Her dark hair was fastened round her head with a band. She had a quantity of it, and it looked even richer and more precious, put up hastily out of her way, than I had seen it look when it was carefully arranged. She was very pale, but extraordinarily quiet and still.

"Dear good Davis," said she, "I have been waiting to speak one word to you."

I turned to her directly. If I had received a musket-ball in the heart, and she had stood there, I almost believe I should have turned to her before I dropped.

"This pretty little creature," said she, kissing the child in her arms, who was playing with her hair and trying to pull it down, "cannot hear what we say—can hear nothing. I trust you so much, and have such great confidence in you, that I want you to make me a promise."

"What is it, Miss?"

"That if we are defeated, and you are absolutely sure of my being taken, you will kill me."

"I shall not be alive to do it, Miss. I shall have died in your defence before it comes to that. They must step across my body, to lay a hand on you."

"But, if you are alive, you brave soldier." How she looked at me! "And if you cannot save me from the Pirates, living, you will save me, dead. Tell me so."

"Well! I told her I would do that, at the last, if all else failed. She took my hand—my rough, coarse hand—and put it to her lips. She put it to the child's lips, and the child kissed it. I believe I had the strength of half a dozen men in me, from that moment, until the fight was over.

All this time, Mr. Commissioner Pordage had been wanting to make a Proclamation to

the Pirates, to lay down their arms and go away; and everybody had been hustling him about and tumbling over him, while he was calling for pen and ink, to write it with. Mrs. Portage, too, had some curious ideas about the British respectability of her nightcap (which had as many frills to it, growing in layers one inside another, as if it was a white vegetable of the artichoke sort), and she wouldn't take the nightcap off, and would be angry when it got crushed by the other ladies who were handing things about, and, in short, she gave as much trouble as her husband did. But, as we were now forming for the defence of the place, they were both poked out of the way with no ceremony. The children and ladies were got into the little trench which surrounded the silver-house (we were afraid of leaving them in any of the light buildings, lest they should be set on fire), and we made the best disposition we could. There was a pretty good store, in point of amount, of tolerable swords and cutlasses. Those were issued. There were, also, perhaps a score or so of spare muskets. Those were brought out. To my astonishment, little Mrs. Fisher that I had taken for a doll and a baby, was not only very active in that service, but volunteered to load the spare arms.

"For, I understand it well," says she, cheerfully, without a shake in her voice.

"I am a soldier's daughter and a sailor's sister, and I understand it too," says Miss Maryon, just in the same way.

Steady and busy behind where I stood, those two beautiful and delicate young women fell to handling the guns, hammering the flints, looking to the locks, and quietly directing others to pass up powder and bullets from hand to hand, as unflinching as the best of tried soldiers.

Serjeant Drooce had brought in word that the pirates were very strong in numbers—over a hundred, was his estimate—and that they were not, even then, all landed; for, he had seen them in a very good position on the further side of the Signal Hill, evidently waiting for the rest of their men to come up. In the present pause, the first we had had since the alarm, he was telling this over again to Mr. Macey, when Mr. Macey suddenly cried out:

"The signal! Nobody has thought of the signal!"

We knew of no signal, so we could not have thought of it. "What signal may you mean, sir?" says Serjeant Drooce, looking sharp at him.

"There is a pile of wood upon the Signal Hill. If it could be lighted—which never has been done yet—it would be a signal of distress to the mainland."

Charker cries, directly: "Serjeant Drooce, dispatch me on that duty. Give me the two men who were on guard with me to-night, and I'll light the fire, if it can be done."

"And if it can't, Corporal——" Mr. Macey strikes in.

"Look at these ladies and children, sir!" says Charker. "I'd sooner *light myself*, than not try any chance to save them."

We gave him a Hurrah!—it burst from us, come of it what might—and he got his two men, and was let out at the gate, and crept away. I had no sooner come back to my place from being one of the party to handle the gate, than Miss Maryon said in a low voice behind me:

"Davis, will you look at this powder. This is not right?"

I turned my head. Christian George King again, and treachery again! Sea-water had been conveyed into the magazine, and every grain of powder was spoiled!

"Stay a moment," said Serjeant Drooce, when I had told him, without causing a movement in a muscle of his face: "look to your pouch, my lad. You Tom Packer, look to your pouch, confound you! Look to your pouches, all you Marines."

The same artful savage had got at them, somehow or another, and the cartridges were all unserviceable. "Hum!" says the Serjeant, "Look to your loading, men. You are right so far?"

Yes; we were right so far.

"Well, my lads, and gentlemen all," says the Serjeant, "this will be a hand-to-hand affair, and so much the better."

He treated himself to a pinch of snuff, and stood up, square-shouldered and broad-chested, in the light of the moon—which was now very bright—as cool as if he was waiting for a play to begin. He stood quiet, and we all stood quiet, for a matter of something like half-an-hour. I took notice from such whispered talk as there was, how little we that the silver did not belong to, thought about it, and how much the people that it did belong to, thought about it. At the end of the half-hour, it was reported from the gate that Charker and the two were falling back on us, pursued by about a dozen.

"Sally! Gate-party, under Gill Davis," says the Serjeant, "and bring 'em in! Like men, now!"

We were not long about it, and we brought them in. "Don't take me," says Charker, holding me round the neck, and stumbling down at my feet when the gate was fast, "don't take me near the ladies or the children, Gill. They had better not see Death, till it can't be helped. They'll see it soon enough."

"Harry!" I answered, holding up his head. "Comrade!"

He was cut to pieces. The signal had been secured by the first pirate party that landed; his hair was all singed off, and his face was blackened with the running pitch from a torch.

He made no complaint of pain, or of anything. "Good bye, old chap," was all he

said, with a smile. "I've got my death. An Death a'nt life. Is it, Gill?"

Having helped to lay his poor body on on side, I went back to my post. Serjeant Drooce looked at me, with his eyebrows little lifted. I nodded. "Close up here, men, and gentlemen all!" said the Serjeant. "A place too many, in the line."

The Pirates were so close upon us at this time, that the foremost of them were already before the gate. More and more came up with a great noise, and shouting loudly. When we believed from the sound that they were all there, we gave three English cheers. The poor little children joined, and were so fully convinced of our being at play, that they enjoyed the noise, and were heard clapping their hands in the silence that followed.

Our disposition was this, beginning with the rear. Mrs. Venning, holding her daughter's child in her arms, sat on the steps of the little square trench surrounding the silver-house, encouraging and directing those women and children as she might have done in the happiest and easiest time of her life. Then, there was an armed line, under Mr. Macey, across the width of the enclosure, facing that way and having their backs towards the gate, in order that they might watch the walls and prevent our being taken by surprise. Then, there was a space of eight or ten feet deep, in which the spare arms were, and in which Miss Maryon and Mrs. Fisher, their hands and dresses blackened with the spoilt gunpowder, worked on their knees, tying such things as knives, old bayonets, and spear-heads, to the muzzles of the useless muskets. Then, there was a second armed line, under Serjeant Drooce, also across the width of the enclosure, but facing to the gate. Then, came the breastwork we had made, with a zig-zag way through it for me and my little party to hold good in retreating, as long as we could, when we were driven from the gate. We all knew that it was impossible to hold the place long, and that our only hope was in the timely discovery of the plot by the boats, and in their coming back.

I and my men were now thrown forward to the gate. From a spy-hole, I could see the whole crowd of Pirates. There were Malays among them, Dutch, Maltese, Greeks, Sambos, Negroes, and Convict Englishmen from the West India Islands; among the last, him with the one eye and the patch across the nose. There were some Portuguese, too, and a few Spaniards. The captain was a Portuguese; a little man with very large ear-rings under a very broad hat, and a great bright shawl twisted about his shoulders. They were all strongly armed, but like a boarding party, with pikes, swords, cutlasses, and axes. I noticed a good many pistols, but not a gun of any kind among them. This gave me to understand that they had considered that a continued roll of musketry might perhaps

have been heard on the mainland; also, that for the reason that fire would be seen from the mainland they would not set the Fort in flames and roast us alive; which was one of their favorite ways of carrying on. I looked about for Christian George King, and if I had seen him I am much mistaken if he would not have received my one round of ball-cartridge in his head. But, no Christian George King was visible.

A sort of a wild Portuguese demon, who seemed either fierce-mad or fierce-drunk—but, they all seemed one or the other—came forward with the black flag, and gave it a wave or two. After that, the Portuguese captain called out in shrill English. "I say you! English fools! Open the gate! Surrender!"

As we kept close and quiet, he said something to his men which I didn't understand, and when he had said it, the one-eyed English rascal with the patch (who had stepped out when he began), said it again in English. It was only this. "Boys of the black flag, this is to be quickly done. Take all the prisoners you can. If they don't yield, kill the children to make them. Forward!" Then, they all came on at the gate, and, in another half minute were smashing and splitting it in.

We struck at them through the gaps and shivers, and we dropped many of them, too; but, their very weight would have carried such a gate, if they had been unarmed. I soon found Serjeant Drooce at my side, forming us six remaining marines in line—Tom Packer next to me—and ordering us to fall back three paces, and, as they broke in, to give them our one little volley at short distance. "Then," says he, "receive them behind your breastwork on the bayonet, and at least let every man of you pin one of the cursed cockchafers through the body."

We checked them by our fire, slight as it was, and we checked them at the breastwork. However, they broke over it like swarms of devils—they were, really and truly, more devils than men—and then it was hand to hand, indeed.

We clubbed our muskets and laid about us; even then, those two ladies—always behind me—were steady and ready with the arm. I had a lot of Maltese and Malays upon me, and, but for a broadsword that Miss Maryon's own hand put in mine, should have got my end from them. But, was that all? No. I saw a heap of banded dark hair and a white dress come thrice between me and them, under my own raised right arm, which each time might have destroyed the wearer of the white dress; and each time one of the lot went down, struck dead.

Drooce was armed with a broadsword, too and did such things with it, that there was a cry, in half-a-dozen languages, of "Kill that serjeant!" as I knew, by the cry being raised in English, and taken up in other tongues. I had received a severe cut

across the left arm a few moments before, and should have known nothing of it, except supposing that somebody had struck me a smart blow, if I had not felt weak, and seen myself covered with spouting blood, and, at the same instant of time, seen Miss Maryon tearing her dress, and binding it with Mrs. Fisher's help round the wound. They called to Tom Packer, who was scouring by, to stop and guard me for one minute, while I was bound, or I should bleed to death in trying to defend myself. Tom stopped directly, with a good sabre in his hand.

In that same moment—all things seem to happen in that same moment, at such a time—half-a-dozen had rushed howling at Serjeant Drooce. The Serjeant, stepping back against the wall, stopped one howl for ever with such a terrible blow, and waited for the rest to come on, with such a wonderfully unmoved face, that they stopped and looked at him.

"See him now!" cried Tom Packer. "Now, when I could cut him out! Gill! Did I tell you to mark my words?"

I implored Tom Packer in the Lord's name, as well as I could in my faintness, to go to the Serjeant's aid.

"I hate and detest him," says Tom, moodily wavering. "Still, he is a brave man." Then he calls out, "Serjeant Drooce, Serjeant Drooce! Tell me you have driven me too hard, and are sorry for it."

The Serjeant, without turning his eyes from his assailants, which would have been instant death to him, answers:

"No. I won't."

"Serjeant Drooce!" cries Tom, in a kind of an agony. "I have passed my word that I would never save you from Death, if I could, but would leave you to die. Tell me you have driven me too hard and are sorry for it, and that shall go for nothing."

One of the group laid the Serjeant's bald bare head open. The Serjeant laid him dead.

"I tell you," says the Serjeant, breathing a little short, and waiting for the next attack. "No. I won't. If you are not man enough to strike for a fellow-soldier because he wants help, and because of nothing else, I'll go into the other world and look for a better man."

Tom swept upon them, and cut him out. Tom and he fought their way through another knot of them, and sent them flying, and came over to where I was beginning again to feel, with inexpressible joy, that I had got a sword in my hand.

They had hardly come to us, when I heard, above all the other noises, a tremendous cry of women's voices. I also saw Miss Maryon, with quite a new face, suddenly clap her two hands over Mrs. Fisher's eyes. I looked towards the silver-house, and saw Mrs. Venning—standing upright on the top of the steps of the trench, with her grey hair and her dark eyes—hide her daughter's child behind

her, among the folds of her dress, strike a parate with her other hand, and fall, shot by his pistol.

The cry arose again, and there was a terrible and confusing rush of the women into the midst of the struggle. In another moment, something came tumbling down upon me that I thought was the wall. It was a heap of Samboes who had come over the wall; and of four men who clung to my legs like serpents, one who clung to my right leg was Christian George King.

"Yup, So-Jeer!" says he, "Christian George King sar berry glad So-Jeer a prisoner. Christian George King been waiting for So-Jeer sech long time. Yup, yup!"

What could I do, with five-and-twenty of them on me, but be tied hand and foot? So, I was tied hand and foot. It was all over now—boats not come back—all lost! When I was fast bound and was put up against the wall, the one-eyed English convict came up with the Portuguese Captain, to have a look at me.

"See!" says he, "Here's the determined man! If you had slept sounder, last night, you'd have slept your soundest last night, my determined man."

The Portuguese Captain laughed in a cool way, and, with the flat of his cutlass, hit me crosswise, as if I was the bough of a tree that he played with: first on the face, and then across the chest and the wounded arm. I looked him steady in the face without tumbling while he looked at me, I am happy to say; but, when they went away, I fell, and lay there.

The sun was up, when I was roused and told to come down to the beach and be embarked. I was full of aches and pains, and could not at first remember; but, I remembered quite soon enough. The killed were lying about all over the place, and the Pirates were burying their dead, and taking away their wounded on hastily-made litters, to the back of the Island. As for us prisoners, some of their boats had come round to the usual harbour, to carry us off. We looked a wretched few, I thought, when I got down there; still, it was another sign that we had fought well, and made the enemy suffer.

The Portuguese Captain had all the women already embarked in the boat he himself commanded, which was just putting off when I got down. Miss Maryon sat on one side of him, and gave me a moment's look, as full of quiet courage, and pity, and confidence, as if it had been an hour long. On the other side of him was poor little Mrs. Fisher, weeping for her child and her mother. I was shoved into the same boat with Drooce and Packer, and the remainder of our party of marines: of whom we had lost two privates, besides Charker, my poor, brave comrade. We all made a melancholy passage, under the hot sun over to the mainland. There, we landed in a solitary place, and were mustered on the

sea, sand. Mr. and Mrs. Macey and their children were amongst us, Mr. and Mrs. Pordage, Mr. Kitten, Mr. Fisher, and Mrs. Belltott. We mustered only fourteen men, fifteen women, and seven children. Those were all that remained of the English who had lain down to sleep last night, unsuspecting and happy, on the Island of Silver-Store.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISON IN THE WOODS.

THERE we all stood, huddled up on the beach under the burning sun, with the pirates closing us in on every side—as forlorn a company of helpless men, women, and children as ever was gathered together out of any nation in the world. I kept my thoughts to myself; but I did not in my heart believe that any one of our lives was worth five minutes' purchase.

The man on whose will our safety or our destruction depended was the Pirate Captain. All our eyes, by a kind of instinct, fixed themselves on him—excepting in the case of the poor children, who, too frightened to cry, stood hiding their faces against their mothers' gowns. The ruler who held all the ruffians about us in subjection, was, judging by appearances, the very last man I should have picked out as likely to fill a place of power among any body of men, good or bad, under heaven. By nation, he was a Portuguese; and, by name, he was generally spoken of among his men as The Don. He was a little, active, weazen, monkey-faced man, dressed in the brightest colours and the finest-made clothes I ever saw. His three-cornered hat was smartly cocked on one side. His coat-skirts were stiffened and stuck out, like the skirts of the dandies in the Mall in London. When the dance was given at the Island, I saw no such lace on any lady's dress there as I saw on his cravat and ruffles. Round his neck he wore a thick gold chain, with a diamond cross hanging from it. His lean, wiry, brown fingers were covered with rings. Over his shoulders, and falling down in front to below his waist, he wore a sort of sling of broad scarlet cloth, embroidered with beads and little feathers, and holding, at the lower part, four loaded pistols, two on a side, lying ready to either hand. His face was mere skin and bone, and one of his wrinkled cheeks had a blue scar running all across it, which drew up that part of his face, and showed his white shining teeth on that side of his mouth. An uglier, meaner, weaker, man-monkey to look at, I never saw; and yet there was not one of his crew, from his mate to his cabin-boy, who did not obey him as if he had been the greatest monarch in the world. As for the Sambos, including especially that evil-minded scoundrel, Christian George King, they never went near him without seeming to want to roll before him on the ground, for the sake of winning

the honour of having one of his little dancing-master's feet set on their black bullock bodies.

There this fellow stood, while we were looking at him, with his hands in his pockets, smoking a cigar. His mate (the one-eyed Englishman), stood by him; a big, hulking fellow he was, who might have eaten the Captain up, pistols and all, and looked about for more afterwards. The Don himself seemed, to an ignorant man like me, to have a gift of speaking in any tongue he liked. I can testify that his English rattled out of his crooked lips as fast as if it was natural to them; making allowance, of course, for his foreign way of clipping his words.

"Now, Captain," says the big mate, running his eye over us as if we were a herd of cattle, "here they are. What's to be done with them?"

"Are they all off the Island?" says the Pirate Captain.

"All of them that are alive," says the mate.

"Good, and very good," says the captain. "Now, Giant-Georgy, some paper, a pen, and a horn of ink."

Those things were brought immediately.

"Something to write on," says the Pirate Captain. "What? Ha! why not a broad nigger back?"

He pointed with the end of his cigar to one of the Sambos. The man was pulled forward, and set down on his knees with his shoulders rounded. The Pirate Captain laid the paper on them, and took a dip of ink—then suddenly turned up his snub-nose with a look of disgust, and, removing the paper again, took from his pocket a fine cambric handkerchief edged with lace, smelt at the scent on it, and afterwards laid it delicately over the Sambo's shoulders.

"A table of black man's back, with the sun on it, close under my nose—ah, Giant-Georgy, pah! pah!" says the Pirate Captain, putting the paper on the handkerchief, with another grimace expressive of great disgust.

He began to write immediately, waiting from time to time to consider a little with himself; and once stopping, apparently, to count our numbers as we stood before him. To think of that villain knowing how to write, and of my not being able to make so much as a decent pothook, if it had been to save my life!

When he had done, he signed to one of his men to take the scented handkerchief off the Sambo's back, and told the sailor he might keep it for his trouble. Then, holding the written paper open in his hand, he came forward a step or two closer to us, and said, with a grin, and a mock bow, which made my fingers itch with wanting to be at him:

"I have the honour of addressing myself to the ladies. According to my reckoning they are fifteen ladies in all. Does any one of them belong to the chief officer of the sloop?"

There was a momentary silence.

"You don't answer me," says the Pirate Captain. "Now, I mean to be answered. Look here, women." He drew one of his four pistols out of his gay scarlet sling, and walked up to Tom Packer, who happened to be standing nearest to him of the men prisoners. "This is a pistol, and it is loaded. I put the barrel to the head of this man with my right hand, and I take out my watch with my left. I wait five minutes for an answer. If I don't get it in five minutes, I blow this man's brains out. I wait five minutes again, and if I don't get an answer, I blow the next man's brains out. And so I go on, if you are obstinate, and your nerves are strong, till not one of your soldiers or your sailors is left. On my word of honour, as a gentleman-buccanier, I promise you that. Ask my men if I ever broke my word."

He rested the barrel of the pistol against Tom Packer's head, and looked at his watch, as perfectly composed, in his cat-like cruelty, as if he was waiting for the boiling of an egg.

"If you think it best not to answer him, ladies," says Tom, "never mind me. It's my trade to risk my life; and I shall lose it in a good cause."

"A brave man," said the Pirate Captain, lightly. "Well, ladies, are you going to sacrifice the brave man?"

"We are going to save him," said Miss Maryon, "as he has striven to save us. I belong to the captain of the sloop. I am his sister." She stopped, and whispered anxiously to Mrs. Macey, who was standing with her. "Don't acknowledge yourself, as I have done—you have children."

"Good!" said the Pirate Captain. "The answer is given, and the brains may stop in the brave man's head." He put his watch and pistol back, and took two or three quick puffs at his cigar to keep it alight—then handed the paper he had written on, and his penfull of ink, to Miss Maryon.

"Read that over," he said, "and sign it for yourself, and the women and children with you."

Saying those words, he turned round briskly on his heel, and began talking, in a whisper, to Giant Georgy, the big English mate. What he was talking about, of course, I could not hear; but I noticed that he motioned several times straight into the interior of the country.

"Davis," said Miss Maryon, "look at this."

She crossed before her sister, as she spoke, and held the paper which the Pirate Captain had given to her, under my eyes—my bound arms not allowing me to take it myself. Never to my dying day shall I forget the shame I felt, when I was obliged to acknowledge to Miss Maryon that I could not read a word of it!

"There are better men than me, ma'am,"

I said, with a sinking heart, "who can read it, and advise you for the best."

"None better," she answered, quietly. "None, whose advice I would so willingly take. I have seen enough, to feel sure of that. Listen, Davis, while I read."

Her pale face turned paler still, as she fixed her eyes on the paper. Lowering her voice to a whisper, so that the women and children near might not hear, she read me these lines:

"To the Captains of English men-of-war, and to the commanders of vessels of other nations, cruising in the Caribbean Seas.

"The precious metal and the jewels laid up in the English Island of Silver-Store, are in the possession of the Buccaneers, at sea.

"The women and children of the Island of Silver-Store, to the number of Twenty-Two, are in the possession of the Buccaneers, on land.

"They will be taken up the country, with fourteen men prisoners (whose lives the Buccaneers have private reasons of their own for preserving), to a place of confinement, which is unapproachable by strangers. They will be kept there until a certain day, previously agreed on between the Buccaneers at sea, and the Buccaneers on land.

"If, by that time, no news from the party at sea, reaches the party on land, it will be taken for granted that the expedition which conveys away the silver and jewels has been met, engaged, and conquered by superior force; that the Treasure has been taken from its present owners; and that the Buccaneers guarding it, have been made prisoners, to be dealt with according to the law.

"The absence of the expected news at the appointed time, being interpreted in this way, it will be the next object of the Buccaneers on land to take reprisals for the loss and the injury inflicted on their companions at sea. The lives of the women and children of the Island of Silver-Store are absolutely at their mercy; and those lives will pay the forfeit, if the Treasure is taken away, and if the men in possession of it come to harm.

"This paper will be nailed to the lid of the largest chest taken from the Island. Any officer whom the chances of war may bring within reading distance of it, is warned to pause and consider, before his conduct signs the death-warrant of the women and children of an English colony.

"Signed, under the Black Flag,

"PEDRO MENDEZ,

"Commander of the Buccaneers, and Chief of the Guard over the English Prisoners."

"The statement above written, in so far as it regards the situation we are now placed in, may be depended on as the truth.

"Signed, on behalf of the imprisoned women and children of the Island of Silver-Store."

"Beneath this last line," said Miss Maryon, pointing to it, "is a blank space, in which I am expected to sign my name."

"And in five minutes' time," added the Pirate Captain, who had stolen close up to us, "or the same consequences will follow which I had the pleasure of explaining to you a few minutes ago."

He again drew out his watch and pistol; but, this time, it was my head that he touched with the barrel.

"When Tom Packer spoke for himself, miss, a little while ago," I said, "please to consider that he spoke for me."

"Another brave man!" said the Pirate Captain, with his ape's grin. "Am I to fire my pistol this time, or am I to put it back again as I did before?"

Miss Maryon did not seem to hear him. Her kind eyes rested for a moment on my face, and then looked up to the bright Heaven above us.

"Whether I sign, or whether I do not sign," she said, "we are still in the hands of God, and the future which His wisdom has appointed will not the less surely come."

With those words she placed the paper on my breast, signed it, and handed it back to the Pirate Captain.

"This is our secret, Davis," she whispered. "Let us keep the dreadful knowledge of it to ourselves as long as we can."

I have another singular confession to make—I hardly expect anybody to believe me when I mention the circumstance—but it is not the less the plain truth that, even in the midst of that frightful situation, I felt, for a few moments, a sensation of happiness while Miss Maryon's hand was holding the paper on my breast, and while her lips were telling me that there was a secret between us which we were to keep together.

The Pirate Captain carried the signed paper at once to his mate.

"Go back to the Island," he says, "and nail that with your own hands on the lid of the largest chest. There is no occasion to hurry the business of shipping the Treasure, because there is nobody on the Island to make signals that may draw attention to it from the sea. I have provided for that; and I have provided for the chance of your being outmanœuvred afterwards, by English, or other cruisers. Here are your sailing orders" (he took them from his pocket while he spoke), "your directions for the disposal of the Treasure, and your appointment of the day and the place for communicating again with me and my prisoners. I have done my part—go you, now, and do yours."

Hearing the clearness with which he gave his orders; knowing what the devilish scheme was that he had invented for preventing the recovery of the Treasure, even if our ships happened to meet and capture the pirates at sea; remembering what the look and the speech of him had been, when he put his pistol to my head and Tom Packer's; I began to understand how it was that this little, weak, weazen, wicked spider had got the first place and kept it among the villains about him.

The mate moved off, with his orders, towards the sea. Before he got there, the Pirate Captain beckoned another of the crew

to come to him; and spoke a few words in his own, or in some other foreign language. I guessed what they meant, when I saw thirty of the pirates told off together, and set in a circle all round us. The rest were marched away after the mate. In the same manner the Sambos were divided next. Ten, including Christian George King, were left with us; and the others were sent down to the canoes. When this had been done, the Pirate Captain looked at his watch; pointed to some trees, about a mile off, which fringed the land as it rose from the beach; said to an American among the pirates round us, who seemed to hold the place of second mate, "In two hours from this time;" and then walked away briskly, with one of his men after him, to some baggage piled up below us on the beach.

We were marched off at once to the shady place under the trees, and allowed to sit down there, in the cool, with our guard in a ring round us. Feeling certain from what I saw, and from what I knew to be contained in the written paper signed by Miss Maryon, that we were on the point of undertaking a long journey up the country, I anxiously examined my fellow-prisoners to see how fit they looked for encountering bodily hardship and fatigue: to say nothing of mental suspense and terror, over and above.

With all possible respect for an official gentleman, I must admit that Mr. Commissioner Pordage struck me as being, beyond any comparison, the most helpless individual in our unfortunate company. What with the fright he had suffered, the danger he had gone through, and the bewilderment of finding himself torn clean away from his safe Government moorings, his poor unfortunate brains seemed to be as completely decomposed as his Diplomatic coat. He was perfectly harmless and quiet, but also perfectly light-headed—as anybody could discover who looked at his dazed eyes or listened to his maundering talk. I tried him with a word or two about our miserable situation; thinking that, if any subject would get a trifle of sense out of him, it must surely be that.

"You will observe," said Mr. Pordage, looking at the torn cuffs of his Diplomatic coat instead of at me, "that I cannot take cognisance of our situation. No memorandum of it has been drawn up; no report in connexion with it has been presented to me. I cannot possibly recognise it until the necessary minutes and memorandums and reports have reached me through the proper channels. When our miserable situation presents its lf to me, on paper, I shall bring it under the notice of Government; and Government, after a proper interval, will bring it back again under my notice; and then I shall have something to say about it. Not a minute before,—no, my man, not a minute before!"

Speaking of Mr. Pordage's wanderings of mind, reminds me that it is necessary to say a word next, about the much more serious case of Serjeant Drooce. The cut on his head, acted on by the heat of the climate, had driven him, to all appearance, stark mad. Besides the danger to himself, if he broke out before the Pirates, there was the danger to the women and children, of trusting him among them—a misfortune which, in our captive condition, it was impossible to avoid. Most providentially, however (as I found on inquiry) Tom Packer, who had saved his life, had a power of controlling him, which none of the rest of us possessed. Some shattered recollection of the manner in which he had been preserved from death, seemed to be still left in a corner of his memory. Whenever he showed symptoms of breaking out, Tom looked at him, and repeated with his hand and arm the action of cutting out right and left which had been the means of his saving the serjeant. On seeing that, Drooce always huddled himself up close to Tom, and fell silent. We,—that is, Packer and I—arranged it together that he was always to keep near Drooce, whatever happened, and however far we might be marched before we reached the place of our imprisonment.

The rest of us men—meaning Mr. Macey, Mr. Fisher, two of my comrades of the Marines, and five of the sloop's crew—were, making allowance for a little smarting in our wounds, in tolerable health, and not half so much broken in spirit by troubles, past, present, and to come, as some persons might be apt to imagine. As for the seamen, especially, no stranger who looked at their jolly brown faces would ever have imagined that they were prisoners, and in peril of their lives. They sat together, chewing their quids, and looking out good-humouredly at the sea, like a gang of liberty-men resting themselves on shore. "Take it easy, soldier," says one of the six, seeing me looking at him. "And, if you can't do that, take it as easy as you can." I thought, at the time, that many a wiser man might have given me less sensible advice than this, though it was only offered by a boatswain's mate.

A movement among the Pirates attracted my notice to the beach below us, and I saw their Captain approaching our halting-place, having changed his fine clothes for garments that were fit to travel in.

His coming back to us had the effect of producing unmistakable signs of preparation for a long journey. Shortly after he appeared, three Indians came up, leading three loaded mules; and these were followed, in a few minutes, by two of the Sambos, carrying between them a copper full of smoking meat and broth. After having been shared among the Pirates, this mess was set down before us, with some wooden bowls floating about

in it, to dip out the food with. Seeing that we hesitated before touching it, the Pirate Captain recommended us not to be too mealy-mouthed, as that was meat from our own stores on the Island, and the last we were likely to taste for a long time to come. The sailors, without any more ado about it, professed their readiness to follow this advice, muttering among themselves that good meat was a good thing, though the devil himself had cooked it. The Pirate Captain then, observing that we were all ready to accept the food, ordered the bonds that confined the hands of us men to be loosened and cast off, so that we might help ourselves. After we had served the women and children, we fell to. It was a good meal—though I can't say that I myself had much appetite for it. Jack, to use his own phrase, stowed away a double allowance. The jolly faces of the seamen lengthened a good deal, however, when they found there was nothing to drink afterwards but plain water. One of them, a fat man, named Short, went so far as to say that, in the turn things seemed to have taken, he should like to make his will before we started, as the stoppage of his grog and the stoppage of his life were two events that would occur uncommonly close together.

When we had done, we were all ordered to stand up. The Pirates approached me and the other men, to bind our arms again; but, the Captain stopped them.

"No," says he. "I want them to get on at a good pace; and they will do that best with their arms free. Now, prisoners," he continued, addressing us, "I don't mean to have any lagging on the road. I have fed you up with good meat, and you have no excuse for not stepping out briskly—women, children, and all. You men are without weapons and without food, and you know nothing of the country you are going to travel through. If you are mad enough, in this helpless condition, to attempt escaping on the march, you will be shot, as sure as you all stand there,—and if the bullet misses, you will starve to death in forests that have no path and no end."

Having addressed us in those words, he turned again to his men. I wondered then, as I had wondered once or twice already, what those private reasons might be, which he had mentioned in his written paper, for sparing the lives of us male prisoners. I hoped he would refer to them now—but I was disappointed.

"While the country allows it," he went on, addressing his crew, "march in a square, and keep the prisoners inside. Whether it is man, woman, or child, shoot any one of them who tries to escape, on peril of being shot yourselves if you miss. But the Indians and mules in front, and the Sambos next to them. Draw up the prisoners all together. Tell off seven men to march before them,

and seven more for each side; and leave the other nine for the rear-guard. A fourth mule for me, when I get tired, and another Indian to carry my guitar."

His guitar! To think of the murderous thief having a turn for strumming tunes, and wanting to cultivate it on such an expedition as ours! I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the guitar brought forward in a neat green case, with the piratical skull and cross-bones and the Pirate Captain's initials painted on it in white.

"I can stand a good deal," whispers Tom Packer to me, looking hard at the guitar; "but confound me, Davis, if it's not a trifle too much to be taken prisoner by such a fellow as that!"

The Pirate Captain lights another cigar.

"March!" says he, with a screech like a cat, and a flourish with his sword, of the sort that a stage-player would give at the head of a mock army.

We all moved off, leaving the clump of trees to the right, going, we knew not whither, to unknown sufferings and an unknown fate. The land that lay before us was wild and open, without fences or habitations. Here and there, cattle wandered about over it, and a few stray Indians. Beyond, in the distance, as far as we could see, rose a prospect of mountains and forests. Above us, was the pitiless sun, in a sky that was too brightly blue to look at. Behind us, was the calm murmuring ocean, with the dear island home which the women and children had lost, rising in the distance like a little green garden on the bosom of the sea. After half-an-hour's walking, we began to descend into the plain, and the last glimpse of the Island of Silver-Store disappeared from our view.

The order of march which we prisoners now maintained among ourselves, being the order which, with certain occasional variations, we observed for the next three days, I may as well give some description of it in this place, before I get occupied with other things, and forget it.

I myself, and the sailor I have mentioned under the name of Short, led the march. After us came Miss Maryon, and Mr. and Mrs. Macey. They were followed by two of my comrades of the Marine, with Mrs. Porridge, Mrs. Bellotti, and two of the strongest of the ladies to look after them. Mr. Fisher, the ship's boy, and the three remaining men of the sloop's crew, with the rest of the women and children came next; Tom Packer, taking care of Serjeant Drooce, brought up the rear. So long as we got on quickly enough, the pirates showed no disposition to interfere with our order of march; but, if there were any signs of lagging—and God knows it was hard enough work for a man to walk under that burning sun!—the villains threatened the weakest of our company with the points of their swords. The younger among the children gave out,

as might have been expected, poor things, very early on the march. Short and I set the example of taking two of them up, pick-a-back, which was followed directly by the rest of the men. Two of Mrs. Macey's three children fell to our share; the eldest, travelling behind us on his father's back. Short hoisted the next in age, a girl, on his broad shoulders. I see him now as if it was yesterday, with the perspiration pouring down his fat face and bushy whiskers, rolling along as if he was on the deck of a ship, and making a sling of his neck-handkerchief, with his clever sailor's fingers, to support the little girl on his back. "I expect you'll marry me, my darling, when you grow up," says he, in his oily, joking voice. And the poor child, in her innocence, laid her weary head down on his shoulder, and gravely and faithfully promised that she would.

A lighter weight fell to my share. I had the youngest of the children, the pretty little boy, already mentioned, who had been deaf and dumb from his birth. His mother's voice trembled sadly, as she thanked me for taking him up, and tenderly put his little dress right while she walked behind me. "He is very little and light of his age," says the poor lady, trying hard to speak steady. "He won't give you much trouble, Davis—he has always been a very patient child from the first." The boy's little frail arms clasped themselves round my neck while she was speaking; and something or other seemed to stop in my throat the cheerful answer that I wanted to make. I walked on with what must have looked, I am afraid, like a gruff silence; the poor child humming softly on my back, in his unchanging, dumb way, till he hummed himself to sleep. Often and often, since that time, in dreams, I have felt those small arms round my neck again, and have heard that dumb murmuring song in my ear, dying away fainter and fainter, till nothing was left but the light breath rising and falling regularly on my cheek, telling me that my little fellow-prisoner had forgotten his troubles in sleep.

We marched, as well as I could guess, somewhere about seven miles that day—a short spell enough, judging by distance, but a terrible long one judging by heat. Our halting place was by the banks of a stream, across which, at a little distance, some wild pigs were swimming as we came up. Beyond us, was the same view of forests and mountains that I have already mentioned; and all round us, was a perfect wilderness of flowers. The shrubs, the bushes, the ground, all blazed again with magnificent colours, under the evening sun. When we were ordered to halt, wherever we set a child down, there that child had laps and laps full of flowers growing within reach of its hand. We sat on flowers, eat on flowers, slept at night on flowers—any chance handful of which would have been well worth a golden guinea among

the gentlefolks in England. It was a sight not easily described, to see niggers, savages, and Pirates, hideous, filthy, and ferocious in the last degree to look at, squatting about grimly upon a natural carpet of beauty, of the sort that is painted in pictures with pretty fairies dancing on it.

The mules were unloaded, and left to roll among the flowers to their hearts' content. A neat tent was set up for the Pirate Captain, at the door of which, after eating a good meal, he laid himself down in a languishing attitude, with a nosegay in the bosom of his waistcoat, and his guitar on his knees, and jingled away at the strings, singing foreign songs, with a shrill voice and with his nose conceitedly turned up in the air. I was obliged to caution Short and the sailors—or they would, to a dead certainty, have put all our lives in peril by openly laughing at him.

We had but a poor supper that night. The Pirates now kept the provisions they had brought from the Island, for their own use; and we had to share the miserable starvation diet of the country, with the Indians and the Sambos. This consisted of black beans fried, and of things they call Tortillas, meaning, in plain English, flat cakes made of crushed Indian corn, and baked on a clay griddle. Not only was this food insipid, but the dirty manner in which the Indians prepared it, was disgusting. However, complaint was useless; for we could see for ourselves, that no other provision had been brought for the prisoners. I heard some grumbling among our men, and some little fretfulness among the children, which their mothers soon quieted. I myself was indifferent enough to the quality of the food; for I had noticed a circumstance, just before it was brought to us, which occupied my mind with more serious considerations. One of the mules was unloaded near us, and I observed among the baggage a large bundle of new axes, doubtless taken from some ship. After puzzling my brains for some time to know what they could be wanted for, I came to the conclusion that they were to be employed in cutting our way through, when we came to the forests. To think of the kind of travelling which these preparations promised—if the view I took of them was the right one—and then to look at the women and children, exhausted by the first day's march, was sufficient to make any man uneasy. It weighed heavily enough on my mind, I know, when I woke up among the flowers, from time to time, that night.

Our sleeping arrangements, though, we had not a single civilised comfort, were, thanks to the flowers, simple and easy enough. For the first time in their lives, the women and children laid down together, with the sky for a roof, and the kind earth for a bed. We men shook ourselves down, as well as we could, all round them; and the Pirates, relieving guard regularly, ranged themselves

outside of all. In that tropical climate, and at that hot time, the night was only pleasantly cool. The bubbling of the stream, and, now and then, the course of the breeze through the flowers, was all we heard. During the hours of darkness, it occurred to me—and I have no doubt the same idea struck my comrades—that a body of determined men, making a dash for it, might now have stood a fair chance of escaping. We were still near enough to the sea-shore to be certain of not losing our way; and the plain was almost as smooth, for a good long run, as a natural race-course. However, the mere act of dwelling on such a notion, was waste of time and thought, situated as we were with regard to the women and children. They were, so to speak, the hostages who insured our submission to captivity, or to any other hardship that might be inflicted on us; a result which I have no doubt the Pirate Captain had foreseen, when he made us all prisoners together on taking possession of the Island.

We were roused up at four in the morning, to travel on before the heat set in; our march under yesterday's broiling sun having been only undertaken for the purpose of getting us away from the sea-shore, and from possible help in that quarter, without loss of time. We forded the stream, wading through it waist-deep: except the children, who crossed on our shoulders. An hour before noon, we halted under two immense wild cotton-trees, about half a mile from a little brook, which probably ran into the stream we had passed in the morning. Late in the afternoon we were on foot again, and encamped for the night at three deserted huts, built of mud and poles. There were the remains of an enclosure here, intended, as I thought, for cattle; and there was an old well, from which our supply of water was got. The greater part of the women were very tired and sorrowful that night; but Miss Maryon did wonders cheering them up.

On the third morning, we began to skirt the edge of a mountain, carrying our store of water with us from the well. We men prisoners had our full share of the burden. What with that, what with the way being all up-hill, and what with the necessity of helping on the weaker members of our company, that day's march was the hardest I remember to have ever got through. Towards evening, after resting again in the middle of the day, we stopped for the night on the verge of the forest. A dim, lowering, awful sight it was, to look up at the mighty wall of trees, stretching in front, and on either side of us without a limit, and without a break. Through the night, though there was no wind blowing over our encampment, we heard deep, moaning, rushing sounds rolling about, at intervals, in the great inner wilderness of leaves; and, now and then, those among us who slept, were

startled up by distant crashes in the depths of the forest—the death-knells of falling trees. We kept fires alight, in case of wild animals stealing out on us in the darkness; and the flaring red light, and the thick, winding smoke, alternately showed and hid the forest-prospect in a strangely treacherous and ghostly way. The children shuddered with fear; even the Pirate Captain forgot, for the first time, to jingle his eternal guitar.

When we were mustered in the morning for the march, I fully expected to see the axes unpacked. To my surprise they were not disturbed. The Indians drew their long chopping-knives (called machetes in the language of that country); made for a place among the trees where I could see no signs of a path; and began cutting at the bushes and shrubs, and at the wild vines and creepers, twirling down together in all sorts of fantastic forms, from the lofty branches. After clearing a few dozen yards inwards they came out to us again, whooping and showing their wicked teeth, as they laid hold of the mules' halters to lead them on. The Pirate Captain, before we moved after, took out a pocket compass, set it, pondered over it for some time, shrugged his shoulders, and screeched out "March," as usual. We entered the forest, leaving behind us the last chance of escape, and the last hope of ever getting back to the regions of humanity and civilisation. By this time, we had walked inland, as nearly as I could estimate, about thirty miles.

The order of our march was now, of necessity, somewhat changed. We all followed each other in a long line, shut in, however, as before, in front and in rear, by the Indians, the Sambos, and the pirates. Though none of us could see a vestige of any path, it was clear that our guides knew where they were going; for, we were never stopped by any obstacles, except the shrubs and wild-vines which they could cut through with their chopping-knives. Sometimes, we marched under great branches which met like arches high over our heads. Sometimes, the boughs were so low that we had to stoop to pass under them. Sometimes, we wound in and out among mighty trunks of trees, with their gnarled roots twisting up far above the ground, and with creepers in full flower twining down in hundreds from their lofty branches. The size of the leaves and the countless multitude of the trees shut out the sun, and made a solemn dimness which it was awful and without hope to walk through. Hours would pass without our hearing a sound but the dreary rustle of our own feet over the leafy ground. At other times, whole troops of parrots, with feathers of all the colours of the rainbow, chattered and shrieked at us; and processions of monkeys, fifty or sixty at a time, followed our progress in the boughs overhead; passing through the thick leaves

with a sound like the rush of a steady wind. Every now and then, the children were startled by lizard-like creatures, three feet long, running up the trunks of the trees as we passed by them; more than once, swarms of locusts tormented us, startled out of their hiding-places by the monkeys in the boughs. For five days we marched incessantly through this dismal forest-region, only catching a clear glimpse of the sky above us, on three occasions in all that time. The distance we walked each day seemed to be regulated by the positions of springs and streams in the forest, which the Indians knew of. Sometimes those springs and streams lay near together; and our day's work was short. Sometimes they were far apart; and the march was long and weary. On all occasions, two of the Indians, followed by two of the Sambos, disappeared as soon as we encamped for the night; and returned, in a longer or shorter time, bringing water with them. Towards the latter part of the journey, weariness had so completely mastered the weaker among our company, that they ceased to take notice of anything. They walked without looking to the right or to the left, and they eat their wretched food and lay down to sleep with a silent despair that was shocking. Mr. Pordage left off maundering now, and Sergeant Droece was so quiet and biddable, that Tom Packer had an easy time of it with him at last. Those among us who still talked, began to get a habit of dropping our voices to a whisper. Short's jokes languished and dwindled; Miss Maryon's voice, still kind and tender as ever, began to lose its clearness; and the poor children, when they got weary and cried, shed tears silently, like old people. It seemed as if the darkness and the hush of the endless forest had cast its shadow on our spirits, and had stolen drearily into our inmost hearts.

On the sixth day, we saw the blessed sunshine on the ground before us, once more. Prisoners as we were, there was a feeling of freedom on stepping into the light again, and on looking up, without interruption, into the clear blue Heaven, from which no human creature can keep any other human creature, when the time comes for rising to it. A turn in the path brought us out suddenly at an Indian village—a wretched place, made up of two rows of huts built with poles, the crevices between them stopped with mud, and the roofs thatched in the coarsest manner with palm-leaves. The savages squatted about, jumped to their feet in terror as we came in view; but, seeing the Indians at the head of our party, took heart, and began chattering and screeching, just like the parrots we had left in the forest. Our guides answered in their gibberish; some lean, half-wild dogs yelped and howled incessantly; and the Pirates discharged their muskets and loaded them again, to make sure that their

powder had not got damp on the march. No want of muskets among them now! The noise and the light and the confusion, after the silence, darkness, and discipline that we had been used to for the last five days, so bewildered us all, that it was quite a relief to sit down on the ground and let the guard about us shut out our view on every side.

"Davis! Are we at the end of the march?" says Miss Maryon, touching my arm.

The other women looked anxiously at me, as she put the question. I got on my feet, and saw the Pirate Captain communicating with the Indians of the village. His hands were making signs in the fussy foreign way, all the time he was speaking. Sometimes, they pointed away to where the forest began again beyond us; and sometimes they went up both together to his mouth, as if he was wishful of getting a fresh supply of the necessities of life.

My eyes next turned towards the mules. Nobody was employed in unpacking the baggage; nobody went near that bundle of axes which had weighed on my mind so much already, and the mystery of which still tormented me in secret. I came to the conclusion that we were not yet at the end of our journey; I communicated my opinion to Miss Maryon. She got up herself, with my help, and looked about her, and made the remark, very justly, that all the huts in the village would not suffice to hold us. At the same time, I pointed out to her that the mule which the Pirate Captain had ridden had been relieved of his saddle, and was being led away, at that moment, to a patch of grass behind one of the huts.

"That looks as if we were not going much farther on," says I.

"Thank Heaven if it be so, for the sake of the poor children!" says Miss Maryon. "Davis, suppose something happened which gave us a chance of escaping? Do you think we could ever find our way back to the sea?"

"Not a hope of getting back, miss. If the Pirates were to let us go this very instant, those pathless forests would keep us in prison for ever."

"Too true! Too true!" she said, and said no more.

In another half-hour we were roused up, and marched away from the village (as I had thought we should be) into the forest again. This time, though there was by no means so much cutting through the underwood needed as in our previous experience, we were accompanied by at least a dozen Indians, who seemed to me to be following us out of sheer idleness and curiosity. We had walked, as well as I could calculate, more than an hour, and I was trudging along with the little deaf-and-dumb boy on my back, as usual, thinking, not very hopefully, of our future prospects, when I was startled by a moan in my ear from the child. One of his arms was trembling round

my neck, and the other pointed away towards my right hand. I looked in that direction—and there, as if it had started up out of the ground to dispute our passage through the forest, was a hideous monster carved in stone, twice my height at least. The thing loomed out of a ghostly white, against the dark curtain of trees all round it. Spots of rank moss stuck about over its great glaring stone-face; its stumpy hands were tucked up into its breast; its legs and feet were four times the size of any human limbs; its body and the flat space of spare stone which rose above its head, were all covered with mysterious devices—little grinning men's faces, heads of crocodiles and apes, twisting knots and twirling knobs, strangely shaped leaves, winding lattice-work; legs, arms, fingers, toes, skulls, bones, and such like. The monstrous statue leaned over on one side, and was only kept from falling to the ground by the roots of a great tree which had wound themselves all round the lower half of it. Altogether, it was as horrible and ghastly an object to come upon suddenly, in the unknown depths of a great forest, as the mind (or, at all events, my mind) can conceive. When I say that the first meeting with the statue struck me speechless, nobody can wonder that the children actually screamed with terror at the sight of it.

"It's only a great big doll, my darling," says Short, at his wit's end how to quiet the little girl on his back. "We'll get a nice soft bit of wood soon, and show these nasty savages how to make a better one."

While he was speaking, Miss Maryon was close behind me, soothing the deaf-and-dumb boy by signs which I could not understand.

"I have heard of these things, Davis," she says. "They are idols, made by a lost race of people, who lived, no one can say how many hundred or how many thousand years ago. That hideous thing was carved and worshipped while the great tree that now supports it was yet a seed in the ground. We must get the children used to these stone monsters. I believe we are coming to many more of them. I believe we are close to the remains of one of those mysterious ruined cities which have long been supposed to exist in this part of the world."

Before I could answer, the word of command from the rear drove us on again. In passing the idol, some of the Pirates fired their muskets at it. The echoes from the reports rang back on us with a sharp rattling sound. We pushed on a few paces, when the Indians a-head suddenly stopped, flourished their chopping-knives, and all screamed out together "El Palacio!" The Englishmen among the Pirates took up the cry, and, running forward through the trees on either side of us, roared out, "The Palace!" Other voices joined theirs in other tongues; and, for a minute or two, there was a general confusion of everybody,—the first that had

occurred since we were marched away, prisoners, from the sea-shore.

I tightened my hold of the child on my back; took Miss Maryon closer to me, to save her from being roughly jostled by the men about us; and marched up as near to the front as the press and the trees would let me. Looking over the heads of the Indians, and between the trunks, I beheld a sight which I shall never forget: no, not to my dying day.

A wilderness of ruins spread out before me, overrun by a forest of trees. In every direction, look where I would, a frightful confusion of idols, pillars, blocks of stone, heavy walls, and flights of steps, met my eye; some, whole and upright; others, broken and scattered on the ground; and all, whatever their condition, overgrown and clasped about by roots, branches, and curling vines, that writhed round them like so many great snakes. Every here and there, strange buildings stood up, with walls on the tops of which three men might have marched abreast—buildings with their roofs burst off or tumbled in, and with the trees springing up from inside, and waving their restless shadows mournfully over the ruins. High in the midst of this desolation, towered a broad platform of rocky earth, scarped away on three sides, so as to make it unapproachable except by scaling ladders. On the fourth side, the flat of the platform was reached by a flight of stone steps, of such mighty size and strength that they might have been made for the use of a race of giants. They led to a huge building girded all round with a row of thick pillars, long enough and broad enough to cover the whole flat space of ground; solid enough, as to the walls, to stand for ever; but broken in, at most places, as to the roof; and overshadowed by the trees that sprang up from inside, like the smaller houses already mentioned, below it. This was the dismal ruin which was called the Palace; and this was the Prison in the Woods which was to be the place of our captivity.

The screeching voice of the Pirate Captain restored order in our ranks, and sent the Indians forward with their chopping-knives to the steps of the Palace. We were directed to follow them across the ruins, and in and out among the trees. Out of every ugly crevice crack in the great stairs, there sprouted up flowers, long grasses, and beautiful large-leaved plants and bushes. When we had toiled to the top of the flight, we could look back from the height over the dark waving top of the forest behind us. More than a glimpse of the magnificent sight, however, was not allowed: we were ordered still to follow the Indians. They had already disappeared in the inside of the Palace; and we went in after them.

We found ourselves, first, under a square portico, supported upon immense flat slabs of stone, which were carved all over, at top and bottom, with death's-heads set in the midst of

circles of sculptured flowers. I guessed the length of the portico to be, at the very least, three hundred feet. In the inside wall of it, appeared four high gaping doorways; three of them were entirely choked up by fallen stones; so jammed together, and so girt about by roots and climbing plants, that no force short of a blast of gunpowder, could possibly have dislodged them. The fourth entrance had, at some former time, been kept just clear enough to allow of the passing of one man at once through the gap that had been made in the fallen stones. Through this, the only passage left into the Palace, or out of it, we followed the Indians into a great hall, nearly one half of which was still covered by the remains of the roof. In the unsheltered half; surrounded by broken stones and with a carved human head, five times the size of life, leaning against it: rose the straight, naked trunk of a beautiful tree, that shot up high above the ruins, and dropped its enormous branches from the very top of it, bending down towards us, in curves like plumes of immense green feathers. In this hall, which was big enough to hold double our number, we were ordered to make a halt, while the Pirate Captain, accompanied by three of his crew, followed the Indians through a doorway, leading off to the left hand, as we stood with our backs to the portico. In front of us, towards the right, was another doorway, through which we could see some of the Indians, cutting away with their knives, right and left, at the overspreading underwood. Even the noise of the hacking, and the hum and murmur of the people outside, who were unloading the mules, seemed to be sounds too faint and trifling to break the awful stillness of the ruins. To my ears, at least, the unearthly silence was deepened rather than broken by the few feeble sounds which tried to disturb it. The wailings of the poor children were stifled within them. The whispers of the women, and the heavy breathing of the overlaboured men, sank and sank gradually till they were heard no more. Looking back now, at the whole course of our troubles, I think I can safely say that nothing—not even the first discovery of the treachery on the Island—tried our courage and endurance like that interval of speechless waiting in the Palace, with the hush of the ruined city, and the dimness of the endless forest, all about us.

When we next saw the Pirate Captain, he appeared at the doorway to the right, just as the Pirates began to crowd in from the portico, with the baggage they had taken from the mules.

"There is the way for the Buccaneers," squeaks the Pirate Captain, addressing the American mate, and pointing to the doorway on the left. "Three big rooms, that will hold you all, and that have more of the roof left on them than any of the others. The prisoners,"

he continues, turning to us, and pointing to the doorway behind him, "will file in, that way, and will find two rooms for them, with the ceilings on the floor, and the trees in their places. I myself, because my soul is big, shall live alone in this grand hall. My bed shall be there in the sheltered corner; and I shall eat, and drink, and smoke, and sing, and enjoy myself, with one eye always on my prisoners, and the other eye always on my guard outside."

Having delivered this piece of eloquence, he pointed with his sword to the prisoners' doorway. We all passed through it quickly, glad to be out of the sight and hearing of him.

The two rooms set apart for us, communicated with each other. The inner one of the two had a second doorway, leading, as I supposed, further into the building, but so clogged up by rubbish, as to be impassable, except by climbing, and that must have been skilful climbing too. Seeing that this accident cut off all easy means of approach to the room from the Pirates' side, we determined, supposing nobody meddled with us, to establish the women and children here; and to take the room nearest to the Pirate Captain and his guard for ourselves.

The first thing to be done was to clear away the rubbish in the women's room. The ceiling was, indeed, as the Pirate Captain had told us, all on the floor; and the growth of trees, shrubs, weeds, and flowers, springing up everywhere among the fragments of stone, was so prodigious in this part of the Palace, that, but for the walls with their barbarous sculptures all round, we should certainly have believed ourselves to be encamped in the forest, without a building near us. All the lighter parts of the rubbish in the women's room we disposed of, cleverly, by piling it in the doorway on the Pirates' side, so as to make any approach from that direction all but impossible, even by climbing. The heavy blocks of stone—and it took two men to lift some of them that were not the heaviest—we piled up in the middle of the floor. Having by this means cleared away plenty of space round the walls, we gathered up all the litter of young branches, bushes, and leaves which the Indians had chopped away; added to them as much as was required of the underwood still standing; and laid the whole smooth and even, to make beds. I noticed, while we were at this work, that the ship's boy—whose name was Robert—was particularly helpful and considerate with the children, when it became necessary to quiet them and to get them to lie down. He was a rough boy to look at, and not very sharp; but, he managed better, and was more naturally tender-hearted with the little ones than any of the rest of us. This may seem a small thing to mention; but Robert's attentive ways with the children, attached them to him; and that attachment, as will be here-

after shown, turned out to be of great benefit to us, at a very dangerous and very important time.

Our next piece of work was to clear our own room. It was close at the side of the Palace; and a break in the outward wall looked down over the sheer precipice on which the building stood. We stopped this up, breast high, in case of accidents, with the rubbish on the floor; we then made our beds, just as we had made the women's beds already.

A little later, we heard the Pirate Captain in the hall, which he kept to himself for his big soul and his little body, giving orders to the American mate about the guard. On mustering the Pirates, it turned out that two of them, who had been wounded in the fight on the Island, were unfit for duty. Twenty-eight, therefore, remained. These, the Pirate Captain divided into companies of seven, who were to mount guard, in turn, for a spell of six hours each company; the relief coming round, as a matter of course, four times in the twenty-four hours. Of the guard of seven, two were stationed under the portico; one was placed as a look-out, on the top-landing of the great flight of steps; and two were appointed to patrol the ground below, in front of the Palace. This left only two men to watch the three remaining sides of the building. So far as any risks of attack were concerned, the precipices at the back and sides of the Palace were a sufficient defence for it, if a good watch was kept on the weak side. But what the Pirate Captain dreaded was the chance of our escaping; and he would not trust the precipices to keep us, knowing we had sailors in our company, and suspecting that they might hit on some substitute for ropes, and lower themselves and their fellow-prisoners down from the back or the sides of the Palace, in the dark. Accordingly, the Pirate Captain settled it that two men out of each company should do double duty, after nightfall: the choice of them to be decided by casting dice. This gave four men to patrol round the sides and the back of the building: a sufficient number to keep a bright look-out. The Pirates murmured a little at the prospect of double duty; but, there was no remedy for it. The Indians, having a superstitious horror of remaining in the ruined city after dark, had bargained to be allowed to go back to their village, every afternoon. And, as for the Sambos, the Pirate Captain knew them better than the English had known them at Silver-Store, and would have nothing to do with them in any matter of importance.

The setting of the watch was completed without much delay. If any of us had felt the slightest hope of escaping, up to this time, the position of our prison and the number of sentinels appointed to guard it, would have been more than enough to extinguish that hope for ever.

An hour before sunset, the Indians, whose

only-business at the Palace was to supply us with food from the village, and to prepare the food for eating—made their last batch of Tortillas, and then left the ruins in a body, at the usual trot of those savages when they are travelling in a hurry.

When the sun had set, the darkness came down upon us, I might almost say, with a rush. Bats whizzed about, and the low warning hum of Mosquitos sounded close to our ears. Flying beetles, with lights in their heads, each light as bright as the light of a dozen glowworms, sparkled through the darkness, in a wonderful manner, all night long. When one of them settled on the walls, he lighted up the hideous sculptures for a yard all round him, at the very least. Outside, in the forest, the dreadful stillness seemed to be drawing its breath, from time to time, when the night-wind swept lightly through the million-million leaves. Sometimes, the surge of monkeys travelling through the boughs, burst out with a sound like waves on a sandy shore; sometimes, the noise of falling branches and trunks rang out suddenly with a crash, as if the great ruins about us were splitting into pieces; sometimes, when the silence was at its deepest—when even the tread of the watch outside had ceased—the quick rustle of a lizard or a snake, sounded treacherously close at our ears. It was long before the children in the women's room were all quieted and hushed to sleep—longer still before we, their elders, could compose our spirits for the night. After all sounds died away among us, and when I thought that I was the only one still awake, I heard Miss Maryon's voice saying, softly, "God help and deliver us!" A man in our room, moving on his bed of leaves, repeated the words after her; and the ship's boy, Robert, half-asleep, half-awake, whispered to himself sleepily, "Amen!" After that, the silence returned upon us, and was broken no more. So the night passed—the first night in our Prison in the Woods.

With the morning, came the discovery of a new project of the Pirate Captain's, for which none of us had been prepared.

Soon after sunrise, the Pirate Captain looked into our room, and ordered all the men in it out into the large hall, where he lived with his big soul and his little body. After eyeing us narrowly, he directed three of the sailors, myself, and two of my comrades, to step apart from the rest. When we had obeyed, the bundle of axes which had troubled my mind so much, was brought into the hall; and four men of the guard, then on duty, armed with muskets and pistols, were marched in afterwards. Six of the axes were chosen and put into our hands, the Pirate Captain pointing warningly, as we took them; to the men with fire-arms in the front of us. He and his mate, both armed to the teeth, then led the way out to the steps; we followed; the other four Pirates came after

us. We were formed, down the steps, in single file; the Pirate Captain at the head; I myself next to him; a Pirate next to me; and so on to the end, in such order as to keep a man with a loaded musket between each one or two of us prisoners. I looked behind me as we started, and saw two of the Sambos—that Christian George King was one of them—following us. We marched round the back of the Palace, and over the ruins beyond it, till we came to track through the forest, the first I had seen. After a quarter of an hour's walking, I saw the sunlight, bright beyond the trees in front of us. In another minute or two, we stood under the clear sky, and beheld at our feet a broad river, running with a swift silent current, and overshadowed by the forest, rising as thick as ever on the bank that was opposite to us.

On the bank where we stood, the trees were young; some great timber of past years having made havoc in this part of the forest, and torn away the old growth to make room for the new. The young trees grew up, mostly, straight and slender,—that is to say, slender for South America, the slightest of them being, certainly, as thick as my leg. After peeping and peering about at the timber, with the look of a man who owned it all, the Pirate Captain sat himself down cross-legged on the grass, and did us the honor to address us.

"Aha! you English, what do you think I have kept you alive for?" says he. "Because I am fond of you? Bah! Because I don't like to kill you? Bah! What for, then? Because I want the use of your arms to work for me. See those trees!" He waved his hand backwards and forwards, over the whole prospect. "Cut them all down—lop off the branches—smooth them into poles—shape them into beams—chop them into planks. Camara lo!" he went on, turning to the mate, "I mean to roof in the Palace again, and to lay new floors over the rubbish of stones. I will make the big house good and dry to live in, in the rainy weather—I will barricade the steps of it for defence against an army,—I will make it my strong castle of retreat for me and my men, and our treasure, and our prisoners, and all that we have, when the English cruisers of the devil get too many for us along the coast. To work, you six! Look at those four men of mine,—their muskets are loaded. Look at these two Sambos who will stop here to fetch help if they want it. Remember the women and children you have left at the Palace—and at your peril and at their peril, turn those axes in your hands from their proper work! You understand? You English fools?"

With those words he jumped to his feet, and ordered the niggers to remain and place themselves at the orders of our guard. Having given these last directions, and having taken his mate's opinion as to whether

three of the Buccaneers would not be enough to watch the Palace in the day, when the six stoutest men of the prisoners were away from it, the Pirate Captain offered his little weazen arm to the American, and strutted back to his castle, on better terms with himself than ever.

As soon as he and the mate were gone, Christian George King tumbled himself down on the grass, and kicked up his ugly heels in convulsions of delight.

"Oh, golly, golly, golly!" says he. "You dam English do work, and Christian George King look on. Yup, Sojeer! whack at them tree!"

I paid no attention to the brute, being better occupied in noticing my next comrade, Short. I had remarked that all the while the Pirate Captain was speaking, he was looking hard at the river, as if the sight of a large sheet of water did his sailorly eyes good. When we began to use the axes, greatly to my astonishment, he buckled to at his work like a man who had his whole heart in it: chuckling to himself at every chop, and wagging his head as if he was in the fore-castle again telling his best yarns.

"You seem to be in spirits, Short?" I says, setting to on a tree close by him.

"The river's put a notion in my head," says he. "Chop away, Gill, as hard as you can, or they may hear us talking."

"What notion has the river put in your head?" I asked that man, following his directions.

"You don't know where that river runs to, I suppose?" says Short. "No more don't I. But, did it say anything particular to you, Gill, when you first set eyes on it? It said to me, as plain as words could speak, 'I'm the road out of this. Come and try me!'—Steady! Don't stop to look at the water. Chop away, man, chop away."

"The road out of this?" says I. "A road without any coaches, Short. I don't see so much as the ruins of one old canoe lying about anywhere."

Short chuckles again, and buries his axe in his tree.

"What are we cutting down these here trees for?" says he.

"Roofs and floors for the Pirate Captain's castle," says I.

"Rafts for ourselves!" says he, with another tremendous chop at the tree, which brought it to the ground—the first that had fallen.

His words struck through me as if I had been shot. For the first time since our imprisonment I now saw, clear as daylight, a chance of escape. Only a chance, to be sure; but, still a chance.

Although the guard stood several paces away from us, and could by no possibility hear a word that we said, through the noise of the axes, Short was too cautious to talk any more.

"Wait till night," he said, lopping the

branches off the tree. "Pass the word on in a whisper to the nearest of our men to work with a will; and say, with a wink of your eye, there's a good reason for it."

After we had been allowed to knock off for that day, the Pirates had no cause to complain of the work we had done; and they reported us to the Pirate Captain as obedient and industrious, so far. When we lay down at night, I took the next place on the leaves to Short. We waited till the rest were asleep, and till we heard the Pirate Captain snoring in the great hall, before we began to talk again about the river and the rafts. This is the amount of what Short whispered in my ear on that occasion:

He told me he had calculated that it would take two large rafts to bear all our company, and that timber enough to make such two rafts might be cut down by six men in ten days, or, at most, in a fortnight. As for the means of fastening the rafts—the lashings, he called them—the stout vines and creepers supplied them abundantly; and the timbers of both rafts might be connected together, in this way, firmly enough for river navigation, in about five hours. That was the very shortest time the job would take, done by the willing hands of men who knew that they were working for their lives, said Short.

These were the means of escape. How to turn them to account was the next question. Short could not answer it; and though I tried all that night, neither could I.

The difficulty was one which, I think, might have puzzled wiser heads than ours. How were six-and-thirty living souls (being the number of us prisoners, including the children) to be got out of the Palace safely, in the face of the guard that watched it? And, even if that was accomplished, when could we count on gaining five hours all to ourselves for the business of making the rafts? The compassing of either of these two designs, absolutely necessary as they both were to our escape, seemed to be nothing more or less than a rank impossibility. Towards morning, I got a wild notion into my head about letting ourselves down from the back of the Palace, in the dark, and taking our chance of being able to seize the sentinels at that part of the building, unawares, and gag them before they could give the alarm to the Pirates in front. But, Short, when I mentioned my plan to him, would not hear of it. He said that men by themselves—provided they had not got a madman, like Drooce, and a maundering old gentleman, like Mr. Pordage, among them—might, perhaps, run some such desperate risk as I proposed; but, that letting women and children, to say nothing of Drooce and Pordage, down a precipice in the dark, with make-shift ropes which might give way at a moment's notice, was out of the question. It was impossible, on further reflection, not to see that Short's view of the matter was the right

one. I acknowledged as much, and then I put it to Short whether our wisest course would not be to let one or two of the sharpest of our fellow-prisoners into our secret, and see what they said. Short asked me which two I had in my mind when I made that proposal?

"Mr. Macey," says I, "because he is naturally quick, and has improved his gifts by learning, and Miss Maryon——"

"How can a woman help us?" says Short, breaking in on me.

"A woman with a clear head and a high courage and a patient resolution—all of which Miss Maryon has got, above all the world—may do more to help us, in our present strait, than any man of our company," says I.

"Well," says Short, "I daresay you're right. Speak to anybody you please, Gill; but, whatever you do, man, stick to it at the trees. Let's get the timber down—that's the first thing to be done, anyhow."

Before we were mustered for work, I took an opportunity of privately mentioning to Miss Maryon and Mr. Macey what had passed between Short and me. They were both thunderstruck at the notion of the rafts. Miss Maryon, as I had expected, made lighter of the terrible difficulties in the way of carrying out our scheme than Mr. Macey did.

"We are left here to watch and think, all day," she whispered—and I could almost hear the quick beating of her heart. "While you are making the best of your time among the trees, we will make the best of ours in the Palace. I can say no more, now—I can hardly speak at all for thinking of what you have told me. Bless you, bless you, for making me hope once more! Go now—we must not risk the consequences of being seen talking together. When you come back at night, look at me. If I close my eyes, it is a sign that nothing has been thought of yet. If I keep them open, take the first safe opportunity of speaking secretly to me or to Mr. Macey."

She turned away; and I went back to my comrades. Half an hour afterwards, we were off for our second day's work among the trees.

When we came back, I looked at Miss Maryon. She closed her eyes. So, nothing had been thought of, yet.

Six more days we worked at putting down the trees, always meriting the same good character for industry from our Pirate-guard. Six more evenings I looked at Miss Maryon, and six times her closed eyes gave me the same disheartening answer. On the ninth day of our work, Short whispered to me, that, if we piled our axes for three days longer, he considered we should have more than timber enough down, to make the rafts. He had thought of nothing, I had thought of nothing, Miss Maryon and Mr. Macey had thought of nothing. I was beginning to get low

in spirits; but, Short was just as cool and easy as ever. "Chop away, Davis," was all he said. "The river won't run dry yet awhile. Chop away!"

We knocked off, earlier than usual that day, the Pirates having a feast in prospect, off a wild hog. It was still broad daylight (out of the forest) when we came back, and when I looked once more in Miss Maryon's face.

I saw a flush in her cheeks; and her eyes met mine brightly. My heart beat quicker at the glance of them; for I saw that the time had come, and that the difficulty was conquered.

We waited till the light was fading, and the Pirates were in the midst of their feast. Then, she beckoned me into the inner room, and I sat down by her in the dimmest corner of it.

"You have thought of something, at last, Miss?"

"I have. But the merit of the thought is not all mine. Chance—no! Providence—suggested the design; and the instrument with which its merciful Wisdom has worked, is—a child."

She stopped, and looked all round her anxiously, before she went on.

"This afternoon," she says, "I was sitting against the trunk of that tree, thinking of what has been the subject of my thoughts ever since you spoke to me. My sister's little girl was whiling away the tedious time, by asking Mr. Kitten to tell her the names of the different plants which are still left growing about the room. You know he is a learned man in such matters!"

I knew that; and have, I believe, formerly given that out, for my Lady to take in writing.

"I was too much occupied," she went on, "to pay attention to them, till they came close to the tree against which I was sitting. Under it and about it, there grew a plant with very elegantly-shaped leaves, and with a kind of berry on it. The child showed it to Mr. Kitten; and saying, 'Those berries look good to eat,' stretched out her hand towards them. Mr. Kitten stopped her. 'You must never touch that,' he said. 'Why not?' the child asked. 'Because if you eat much of it, it would poison you.' 'And if I only eat a little?' said the child, laughing. 'If you only eat a little,' said Mr. Kitten, 'it would throw you into a deep sleep—a sleep that none of us could wake you from, when it was time for breakfast—a sleep that would make your manna think you were dead.' Those words were hardly spoken, when the thought that I have now to tell you of, flashed across my mind. But, before I say anything more, answer me one question. Am I right in supposing that our attempt at escape must be made in the night?"

"At night, certainly," says I, "because we can be most sure, then, that the Pirates off guard are all in this building, and not likely to leave it."

"I understand. Now, Davis, hear what I have observed of the habits of the men who keep us imprisoned in this place. The first change of guard at night, is at nine o'clock. At that time, seven men come in from watching, and nine men (the extra night-guard) go out to replace them; each party being on duty, as you know, for six hours. I have observed, at the nine o'clock change of guard, that the seven men who come off duty, and the nine who go on, have a supply of baked cakes of Indian corn, reserved expressly for their use. They divide the food between them; the Pirate Captain (who is always astir at the change of guard) generally taking a cake for himself, while the rest of the men take theirs. This makes altogether, seventeen men who partake of food especially reserved for them, at nine o'clock. So far you understand me?"

"Clearly, Miss."

"The next thing I have noticed, is the manner in which that food is prepared. About two hours before sunset, the Pirate Captain walks out to smoke, after he has eaten the meal which he calls his dinner. In his absence from the hall, the Indians light their fire on the unsheltered side of it, and prepare the last batch of food before they leave us for the night. They knead up two separate masses of dough. The largest is the first which is separated into cakes and baked. That is taken for the use of us prisoners and of the men who are off duty all the night. The second and smaller piece of dough is then prepared for the nine o'clock change of guard. On that food—come nearer, Davis, I must say it in a whisper—on that food all our chances of escape now turn. If we can drug it unobserved, the Pirates who go off duty, the Pirates who go on duty, and the Captain, who is more to be feared than all the rest, will be as absolutely insensible to our leaving the Palace, as if they were every one of them dead men."

I was unable to speak—I was unable even to fetch my breath at those words.

"I have taken Mr. Kitten, as a matter of necessity, into our confidence," she said. "I have learnt from him a simple way of obtaining the juice of that plant which he forbade the child to eat. I have also made myself acquainted with the quantity which it is necessary to use for our purpose; and I have resolved that no hands but mine shall be charged with the work of kneading it into the dough."

"Not you, Miss,—not you. Let one of us—let me—run that risk."

"You have work enough and risk enough already," said Miss Maryon. "It is time that the women, for whom you have suffered and ventured so much, should take their share. Besides, the risk is not great, where the Indians only are concerned. They are idle and curious. I have seen, with my own

eyes, that they are as easily tempted away from their occupation by any chance sight or chance noise as if they were children; and I have already arranged with Mr. Macey that he is to excite their curiosity by suddenly pulling down one of the loose stones in that doorway, when the right time comes. The Indians are certain to run in here to find out what is the matter. Mr. Macey will tell them that he has seen a snake,—they will hunt for the creature (as I have seen them hunt, over and over again, in this ruined place)—and while they are so engaged, the opportunity that I want, the two minutes to myself, which are all that I require, will be mine. Dread the Pirate Captain, Davis, for the slightest caprice of his may ruin all our hopes,—but never dread the Indians, and never doubt me."

Nobody, who had looked in her face at that moment—or at any moment that ever I knew of—could have doubted her.

"There is one thing more," she went on.

"When is the attempt to be made?"

"In three days' time," I answered; "there will be timber enough down to make the rafts."

"In three days' time, then, let us decide the question of our freedom or our death." She spoke those words with a firmness that amazed me. "Rest now," she said. "Rest and hope."

The third day was the hottest we had yet experienced; we were kept longer at work than usual; and when we had done, we left on the bank enough, and more than enough, of timber and poles, to make both the rafts.

The Indians had gone when we got back to the Palace, and the Pirate Captain was still smoking on the flight of steps. As we crossed the hall, I looked on one side and saw the Tortillas set up in a pile, waiting for the men who came in and went out at nine o'clock.

At the door which opened between our room and the women's room, Miss Maryon was waiting for us.

"Is it done?" I asked in a whisper.

"It is done," she answered.

It was, then, by Mr. Macey's watch (which he had kept hidden about him throughout our imprisonment), seven o'clock. We had two hours to wait: hours of suspense, but hours of rest also for the overworked men who had been cutting the wood. Before I lay down, I looked into the inner room. The women were all sitting together; and I saw by the looks they cast on me that Miss Maryon had told them of what was coming with the night. The children were much as usual, playing quiet games among themselves. In the men's room, I noticed that Mr. Macey had posted himself along with Tom Packer, close to Sergeant Drooce, and that Mr. Fisher seemed to be taking great pains to make himself agreeable to Mr. Fordage. I was glad to see that the two gentlemen of the

company, who were quick-witted and experienced in most things, were already taking in hand the two unreasonable men.

The evening brought no coolness with it. The heat was so oppressive that we all panted under it. The stillness in the forest was awful. We could almost hear the falling of the leaves.

Half-past seven, eight, half-past eight, a quarter to nine—Nine. The tramp of feet came up the steps on one side, and the tramp of feet came into the hall, on the other. There was a confusion of voices,—then, the voice of the Pirate Captain, speaking in his own language,—then, the voice of the American mate, ordering out the guard,—then silence.

I crawled to the door of our room, and laid myself down behind it, where I could see a strip of the hall, being that part of it in which the way out was situated. Here, also, the Pirate Captain's tent had been set up, about twelve or fourteen feet from the door. Two torches were burning before it. By their light, I saw the guard on duty file out, each man munching his Tortilla, and each man grumbling over it. At the same time, in the part of the hall which I could not see, I heard the men off duty grumbling also. The Pirate Captain, who had entered his tent the minute before, came out of it, and calling to the American mate, at the far end of the hall, asked sharply in English, what that murmuring meant.

"The men complain of the Tortillas," the mate tells him. "They say, they are nastier than ever to-night."

"Bring me one, and let me taste it," said the Captain. I had often before heard people talk of their hearts being in their mouths, but I never really knew what the sensation was, till I heard that order given.

The Tortilla was brought to him. He nibbled a bit off it, spat the morsel out with disgust, and threw the rest of the cake away.

"Those Indian beasts have burnt the Tortillas," he said, "and their dirty hides shall suffer for it to-morrow morning." With those words, he whisked round on his heel, and went back into his tent.

Some of the men had crept up behind me, and, looking over my head, had seen what I saw. They passed the account of it in whispers to those who could not see; and they, in their turn, repeated it to the women. In five minutes everybody in the two rooms knew that the scheme had failed with the very man whose sleep it was most important to secure. I heard no stifled crying among the women or stifled cursing among the men. The despair of that time was too deep for tears, and too deep for words.

I myself could not take my eyes off the tent. In a little while the came out of it again, puffing and panting with the heat. He lighted a cigar at one of the torches, and laid

himself down on his cloak just inside the doorway leading into the portico, so that all the air from outside might blow over him. Little as he was, he was big enough to lie right across the narrow way out.

He smoked and he smoked, slowly and more slowly, for, what seemed to me to be, hours, but for what, by the watch, was little more than ten minutes after all. Then, the cigar dropped out of his mouth—his hand sought for it, and sank lazily by his side—his head turned over a little towards the door—and he fell off: not into the drugged sleep that there was safety in, but into his light, natural sleep, which a touch on his body might have disturbed.

"Now's the time to gag him," says Short, creeping up close to me, and taking off his jacket and shoes.

"Steady," says I. "Don't let's try that till we can try nothing else. There are men asleep near us who have not eaten the drugged cakes—the Pirate Captain is light and active—and if the gag slips on his mouth, we are all done for. I'll go to his head, Short, with my jacket ready in my hands. When I'm there, do you lead the way with your mates, and step gently into the portico, over his body. Every minute of your time is precious on account of making the rafts. Leave the rest of the men to get the women and children over; and leave me to gag him if he stirs while we are getting out."

"Shake hands on it, Davis," says Short, getting to his feet. "A team of horses wouldn't have dragged me out first, if you hadn't said that about the rafts."

"Wait a bit," says I, "till I speak to Mr. Kitten."

I crawled back into the room, taking care to keep out of the way of the stones in the middle of it, and asked Mr. Kitten how long it would be before the drugged cakes acted on the men outside who had eaten them? He said we ought to wait another quarter of an hour, to make quite sure. At the same time, Mr. Macey whispered in my ear to let him pass over the Pirate Captain's body, alone, with the dangerous man of our company—Serjeant Drooce. "I know how to deal with mad people," says he. "I have persuaded the Sergeant that if he is quiet, and if he steps carefully, I can help him to escape from Tom Packer, whom he is beginning look on as his keeper. He has been as stealthy and quiet as a cat ever since—and I will answer for him till we get to the river side."

What a relief it was to hear that! I was turning round to get back to Short, when a hand touched me lightly.

"I have heard you talking," whispered Miss Maryon; "and I will prepare all in my room for the risk we must now run. Robert, the ship's boy, whom the children are so fond of, shall help us to persuade them, once more, that we are going to play a game. If you can get one of the torches from the tent, and

pass it in here, it may prevent some of us from stumbling. Don't be afraid of the women and children, Davis. They shall not endanger the brave men who are saving them."

I left her at once to get the torch. The Pirate Captain was still fast asleep as I stole on tiptoe, into the hall, and took it from the tent. When I returned, and gave it to Miss Maryon, her sister's little deaf and dumb boy saw me, and, slipping between us, caught tight hold of one of my hands. Having been used to riding on my shoulders for so many days, he had taken a fancy to me; and, when I tried to put him away, he only clung the tighter, and began to murmur in his helpless dumb way. Slight as the noise was which the poor little fellow could make, we all dreaded it. His mother wrung her hands in despair when she heard him; and Mr. Fisher whispered to me for Heaven's sake to quiet the child, and humour him at any cost. I immediately took him up in my arms, and went back to Short.

"Sling him on my back," says I, "as you slung the little girl on your own the first day of the march. I want both my hands, and the child won't be quiet away from me."

Short did as I asked him in two minutes. As soon as he had finished, Mr. Macey passed the word on to me, that the quarter of an hour was up; that it was time to try the experiment with Drooce; and that it was necessary for us all to humour him by feigning sleep. We obeyed. Looking out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mr. Macey take the mad Serjeant's arm, point round to us all, and then lead him out. Holding tight by Mr. Macey, Drooce stepped as lightly as a woman, with as bright and wicked a look of cunning as ever I saw in any human eyes. They crossed the hall—Mr. Macey pointed to the Pirate Captain, and whispered, "Hush!"—the Serjeant imitated the action and repeated the word—then the two stepped over his body (Drooce cautiously raising his feet the highest), and disappeared through the portico. We waited to hear if there was any noise or confusion. Not a sound.

I got up, and Short handed me his jacket for the gag. The child, having been startled from his sleep by the light of the torch, when I brought it in, had fallen off again, already, on my shoulder. "Now for it," says I, and stole out into the hall.

I stopped at the tent, went in, and took the first knife I could find there. With the weapon between my teeth, with the little innocent asleep on my shoulder, with the jacket held ready in both hands, I knelt down on one knee at the Pirate Captain's head, and fixed my eyes steadily on his ugly sleeping face.

The sailors came out first, with their shoes in their hands. No sound of footsteps from any one of them. No movement in the ugly face as they passed over it.

The women and children were ready next. Robert, the ship's boy, lifted the children over: most of them holding their little hands over their mouths to keep from laughing—so well had Robert persuaded them that we were only playing a game. The women passed next, all as light as air; after them, in obedience to a sign from me, my comrades of the Marines, holding their shoes in their hands, as the sailors had done before them. So far, not a word had been spoken, not a mistake had been made—so far, not a change of any sort had passed over the Pirate Captain's face.

There were left now in the hall, besides myself and the child on my back, only Mr. Fisher and Mr. Pordage. Mr. Pordage! Up to that moment, in the risk and excitement of the time, I had not once thought of him.

I was forced to think of him now, though; and with anything but a friendly feeling.

At the sight of the Pirate Captain, asleep across the way out, the unfortunate, mischievous old simpleton tossed up his head, and folded his arms, and was on the point of breaking out loud into a spoken document of some kind, when Mr. Fisher wisely and quickly clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Government despatches outside," whispers Mr. Fisher, in an agony. "Secret service. Forty-nine reports from head-quarters, all waiting for you half a mile off. I'll show you the way, sir. Don't wake that man there, who is asleep: he must know nothing about it—he represents the Public."

Mr. Pordage suddenly looked very knowing and hugely satisfied with himself. He followed Mr. Fisher to within a foot of the Pirate Captain's body—then stopped short.

"How many reports?" he asked, very anxiously.

"Forty-nine," said Mr. Fisher. "Come along, sir,—and step clean over the Public, whatever you do."

Mr. Pordage instantly stepped over, as jauntily as if he was going to dance. At the moment of his crossing, a hanging rag of his cursed, useless, unfortunate, limp Diplomatic coat touched the Pirate Captain's forehead, and woke him.

I drew back softly, with the child still asleep on my shoulder, into the black shadow of the wall behind me. At the instant when the Pirate Captain awoke, I had been looking at Mr. Pordage, and had consequently lost the chance of applying the gag to his mouth suddenly, at the right time.

On rousing up, he turned his face inwards, towards the prisoners' room. If he had turned it outwards, he must to a dead certainty have seen the tail of Mr. Pordage's coat, disappearing in the portico.

Though he was awake enough to move, he was not awake enough to have the full possession of his sharp senses. The drowsiness of his sleep still hung about him. He

yawned, stretched himself, spat wearily, sat up, spat again, got on his legs, and stood up, within three feet of the shadow in which I was hiding behind him.

I forgot the knife in my teeth,—I declare solemnly, in the frightful suspense of that moment, I forgot it—and doubled my fist as if I was an unarmed man, with the purpose of stunning him by a blow on the head if he came any nearer. I suppose I waited, with my fist clenched, nearly a minute, while he waited, yawning and spitting. At the end of that time, he made for his tent, and I heard him (with what thankfulness no words can tell!) roll himself down, with another yawn, on his bed inside.

I waited—in the interest of us all—to make quite sure, before I left, that he was asleep again. In what I reckoned as about five minutes' time, I heard him snoring, and felt free to take myself and my little sleeping comrade out of the prison, at last.

The drugged guards in the portico were sitting together, dead asleep, with their backs against the wall. The third man was lying flat, on the landing of the steps. Their arms and ammunition were gone: wisely taken by our men—to defend us, if we were meddled with before we' escaped, and to kill food for us when we committed ourselves to the river.

At the bottom of the steps I was startled by seeing two women standing together. They were Mrs. Macey and Miss Maryon: the first, waiting to see her child safe; the second (God bless her for it!) waiting to see *me* safe.

In a quarter of an hour we were by the river-side, and saw the work bravely begun: the sailors and the marines under their orders, labouring at the rafts in the shallow water by the bank; Mr. Macey and Mr. Fisher rolling down fresh timber as it was wanted; the women cutting the vines, creepers, and withies for the lashings. We brought with us three more pair of hands to help; and all worked with such a will, that, in four hours and twenty minutes, by Mr. Macey's watch, the rafts, though not finished as they ought to have been, were still strong enough to float us away.

Short, another seaman, and the ship's boy, got aboard the first raft, carrying with them poles and spare timber. Miss Maryon, Mrs. Fisher and her husband, Mrs. Macey and her husband and three children, Mr. and Mrs. Pordage, Mr. Kitten, myself, and women and children besides, to make up eighteen, were the passengers on the leading raft. The second raft, under the guidance of the two other sailors, held Serjeant Drooce (gagged, for he now threatened to be noisy again), Tom Packer, the two marines, Mrs. Belltott, and the rest of the women and children. We all got on board silently and quickly, with a fine moonlight over our heads, and without accidents or delays of any kind.

It was a good half-hour before the time would come for the change of guard at the prison, when the lashings which tied us to the bank were cast off, and we floated away, a company of free people, on the current of an unknown river.

CHAPTER III.

THE RAFTS ON THE RIVER.

WE contrived to keep afloat all that night, and, the stream running strong with us, to glide a long way down the river. But, we found the night to be a dangerous time for such navigation, on account of the eddies and rapids, and it was therefore settled next day that in future we would bring-to at sunset, and encamp on the shore. As we knew of no boats that the Pirates possessed, up at the Prison in the Woods, we settled always to encamp on the opposite side of the stream, so as to have the breadth of the river between our sleep and them. Our opinion was, that if they were acquainted with any near way by land to the mouth of this river, they would come up it in force, and re-take us or kill us, according as they could; but, that if that was not the case, and if the river ran by none of their secret stations, we might escape.

When I say we settled this or that, I do not mean that we planned anything with any confidence as to what might happen an hour hence. So much had happened in one night, and such great changes had been violently and suddenly made in the fortunes of many among us, that we had got better used to uncertainty, in a little while, than I dare say most people do in the course of their lives.

The difficulties we soon got into, through the off-settings and point-currents of the stream, made the likelihood of our being drowned, alone—to say nothing of our being retaken—as broad and plain as the sun at noon-day to all of us. But, we all worked hard at managing the rafts, under the direction of the seamen (of our own skill, I think we never could have prevented them from over-setting), and we also worked hard at making good the defects in their first-hasty construction—which the water soon found out. While we humbly resigned ourselves to going down, if it was the will of Our Father that was in Heaven, we humbly made up our minds, that we would all do the best that was in us.

And so we held on, gliding with the stream. It drove us to this bank, and it drove us to that bank, and it turned us, and whirled us; but yet it carried us on. Sometimes much too slowly, sometimes much too fast, but yet it carried us on.

My little deaf and dumb boy slumbered a good deal now, and that was the case with all the children. They caused very little trouble to any one. They seemed, in my eyes, to get more like one another, not only in quiet manner, but in the face, too. The motion of the raft was usually, so much

the same, the scene was usually so much the same, the sound of the soft wash and ripple of the water was usually so much the same, that they were made drowsy, as they might have been by the constant playing of one tune. Even on the grown people, who worked hard and felt anxiety, the same things produced something of the same effect. Every day was so like the other, that I soon lost count of the days, myself, and had to ask Miss Maryon, for instance, whether this was the third or fourth? Miss Maryon had a pocket-book and pencil, and she kept the log; that is to say, she entered up a clear little journal of the time, and of the distances our seamen thought we had made, each night.

So, as I say, we kept afloat and glided on. All day long, and every day, the water, and the woods, and sky; all day long, and every day, the constant watching of both sides of the river, and far a-head at every bold turn and sweep it made, for any signs of Pirate-boats, or Pirate-dwellings. So, as I say, we kept afloat and glided on. The days melting themselves together to that degree, that I could hardly believe my ears when I asked "How many, now, Miss?" and she answered, "Seven."

To be sure, poor Mr. Pordage had, by about now, got his Diplomatic coat into such a state as never was seen. What with the mud of the river, what with the water of the river, what with the sun, and the dews, and the tearing boughs, and the thickets, it hung about him in discoloured shreds like a mop. The sun had touched him a bit. He had taken to always polishing one particular button, which just held on to his left wrist, and to always calling for stationery. I suppose that man called for pens, ink, and paper, tape, and sealing-wax, upwards of one thousand times in four and twenty hours. He had an idea that we should never get out of that river unless we were written out of it in a formal Memorandum; and the more we laboured at navigating the rafts, the more he ordered us not to touch them at our pencil, and the more he sat and roared for stationery.

Mrs. Pordage, similarly, persisted in wearing her night-cap. I doubt if any one but ourselves who had seen the progress of that article of dress, could by this time have told what it was meant for. It had got so limp and ragged that she couldn't see out of her eyes for it. It was so dirty, that whether it was vegetable matter out of a swamp, or weeds out of the river, or an old porter's knot from England, I don't think any new spectator could have said. Yet, this unfortunate old woman had a notion that it was not only vastly genteel, but that it was the correct thing as to propriety. And she really did carry herself over the other ladies who had no night-caps, and who were forced to tie up their hair how they could, in a superior manner that was perfectly amazing.

I don't know what she looked like, sitting

in that blessed night-cap, on a log of wood, outside the hut or cabin upon our raft. She would have rather resembled a fortune-teller in one of the picture-books that used to be in the shop windows in my boyhood, except for her stateliness. But, Lord, bless my heart, the dignity with which she sat and moped, with her head in that bundle of tatters, was like nothing else in the world! She was not on speaking terms with more than three of the ladies. Some of them had, what she called, "taken precedence" of her—in getting into, or out of, that miserable little shelter!—and others had not called to pay their respects, or something of that kind. So, there she sat, in her own state and ceremony, while her husband sat on the same log of wood, ordering us one and all to let the raft go to the bottom, and to bring him stationary.

What with this noise on the part of Mr. Commissioner Pordage, and what with the cries of Serjeant Drooce on the raft astern (which were sometimes more than Tom Packer could silence), we often made our slow way down the river, anything but quietly. Yet, that it was of great importance that no ears should be able to hear us from the woods on the banks, could not be doubted. We were looked for, to a certainty, and we might be retaken at any moment. It was an anxious time; it was, indeed, indeed, an anxious time.

On the seventh night of our voyage on the rafts, we made fast, as usual, on the opposite side of the river to that from which we had started, in as dark a place as we could pick out. Our little encampment was soon made, and supper was eaten, and the children fell asleep. The watch was set, and everything made orderly for the night. Such a starlight night, with such blue in the sky, and such black in the places of heavy shade on the banks of the great stream!

Those two ladies, Miss Maryon and Mrs. Fisher, had always kept near me since the night of the attack. Mr. Fisher, who was untiring in the work of our raft, had said to me:

"My dear little childless wife has grown so attached to you, Davis, and you are such a gentle fellow, as well as such a determined one;" our party had adopted that last expression from the one-eyed English pirate, and I repeat what Mr. Fisher said, only because he said it; "that it takes a load off my mind to leave her in your charge."

I said to him: "Your lady is in far better charge than mine, sir, having Miss Maryon to take care of her; but, you may rely upon it, that I will guard them both—faithful and true."

Says he: "I do rely upon it, Davis, and I heartily wish all the silver on our old Island was yours."

That seventh starlight night, as I have said, we made our camp, and got our supper, and set our watch, and the children fell asleep. It was solemn and beautiful in those

wild and solitary parts, to see them, every night before they lay down, kneeling under the bright sky, saying their little prayers at women's laps. At that time we men all uncovered, and mostly kept at a distance. When the innocent creatures rose up, we murmured "Amen!" all together. For, though we had not heard what they said, we knew it must be good for us.

At that time, too, as was only natural, those poor mothers in our company whose children had been killed, shed many tears. I thought the sight seemed to console them while it made them cry; but, whether I was right or wrong in that, they wept very much. On this seventh night, Mrs. Fisher had cried for her lost darling until she cried herself asleep. She was lying on a little couch of leaves and such-like (I made the best little couch I could, for them every night), and Miss Maryon had covered her, and sat by her, holding her hand. The stars looked down upon them. As for me, I guarded them.

"Davis!" says Miss Maryon. (I am not going to say what a voice she had. I couldn't if I tried.)

"I am here, Miss."

"The river sounds as if it were swollen to-night."

"We all think, Miss, that we are coming near the sea."

"Do you believe, now, we shall escape?"

"I do now, Miss, really believe it." I had always said I did; but, I had in my own mind been doubtful."

"How glad you will be, my good Davis, to see England again!"

I have another confession to make that will appear singular. When she said these words, something rose in my throat; and the stars I looked away at, seemed to break into sparkles that fell down my face and burnt it.

"England is not much to me, Miss, except as a name."

"Oh! So true an Englishman should not say that!—Are you not well to-night, Davis?" Very kindly, and with a quick change.

"Quite well, Miss."

"Are you sure? Your voice sounds altered in my hearing."

"No, Miss, I am a stronger man than ever. But, England is nothing to me."

Miss Maryon sat silent for so long a while, that I believed she had done speaking to me for one time. However, she had not; for by and by she said in a distinct, clear tone?

"No, good friend; you must not say, that England is nothing to you. It is to be much to you, yet—everything to you. You have to take back to England the good name you have earned here, and the gratitude and attachment and respect you have won here; and you have to make some good English girl very happy and proud, by marrying her; and I shall one day see her, I hope, and make her happier and prouder still, by telling her what noble services her husband's were in

South America, and what a noble friend he was to me there."

Though she spoke these kind words in a cheering manner, she spoke them compassionately. I said nothing. It will appear to be another strange confession, that I paced to and fro, within call, all that night, a most unhappy man reproaching myself all the night long. "You are as ignorant as any man alive; you are as obscure as any man alive; you are as poor as any man alive; you are no better than the mud under your foot." That was the way in which I went on against myself until the morning.

With the day, came the day's labour. What I should have done without the labour, I don't know. We were afloat again at the usual hour, and were again making our way down the river. It was broader, and clearer of obstructions than it had been, and it seemed to flow faster. This was one of Drocco's quiet days; Mr. Pordage, besides being sulky, had almost lost his voice; and we made good way, and with little noise.

There was always a seaman forward on the raft, keeping a bright look-out. Suddenly, in the full heat of the day, when the children were slumbering, and the very trees and reeds appeared to be slumbering, this man—it was Short—holds up his hand, and cries with great caution:

"Avast! Voices ahead!"

We held on against the stream as soon as we could bring her up, and the other raft followed suit. At first, Mr. Macey, Mr. Fisher, and myself, could hear nothing; though both the seamen aboard of us agreed that they could hear voices and oars. After a little pause, however, we united in thinking that we *could* hear the sound of voices, and the dip of oars. But, you can hear a long way in those countries, and there was a bend of the river before us, and nothing was to be seen except such waters and such banks as we were now in the eighth day (and might, for the matter of our feelings, have been in the eightieth), of having seen with anxious eyes.

It was soon decided to put a man ashore who should creep through the wood, see what was coming, and warn the rafts. The rafts in the meantime to keep the middle of the stream. The man to be put ashore, and not to swim ashore, as the first thing could be more quickly done than the second. The raft conveying him, to get back into mid-stream, and to hold on along with the other, as well as it could, until signalled by the man. In case of danger, the man to shift for himself until it should be safe to take him aboard again. I volunteered to be the man.

We knew that the voices and oars must come up slowly against the stream; and our seamen knew, by the set of the stream, under which bank they would come. I was put ashore accordingly. The raft got off well, and I broke into the wood.

Steaming hot it was, and a tearing place to

get through. So much the better for me, since it was something to contend against and do. I cut off the bend in the river, at a great saving of space, came to the water's edge again, and hid myself, and waited. I could now hear the dip of the oars very distinctly; the voices had ceased.

The sound came on in a regular tune, and as I lay hidden, I fancied the tune so played to be, "Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King!" over and over again, always the same, with the pauses always at the same places. I had likewise time to make up my mind that if these were the Pirates, I could and would (barring my being shot), swim off to my raft, in spite of my wound, the moment I had given the alarm, and hold my old post by Miss Marvon.

"Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King!" coming up, now, very near.

I took a look at the branches about me, to see where a shower of bullets would be most likely to do me least hurt; and I took a look back at the track I had made in forcing my way in; and now I was wholly prepared and fully ready for them.

"Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King!" Here they were!

Who were they? The barbarous Pirates, scum of all nations, headed by such men as the hideous little Portuguese monkey, and the one-eyed English convict with the gash across his face, that ought to have gashed his wicked head off? The worst men in the world picked out from the worst, to do the cruellest and most atrocious deeds that ever stained it? The howling, murdering, black-flag waving, mad, and drunken crowd of devils that had overcome us by numbers and by treachery? No. These were English men in English boats—good blue-jackets and red-coats—marines that I knew myself, and sailors that knew our seamen! At the helm of the first boat, Captain Carton, eager and steady. At the helm of the second boat, Captain Marvon, brave and bold. At the helm of the third boat, an old seaman, with determination carved into his watchful face, like the figure-head of a ship. Every man doubly and trebly armed from head to foot. Every man lying to at his work, with a will that had all his heart and soul in it. Every man looking out for any trace of friend or enemy, and burning to be the first to do good, or avenge evil. Every man with his face on fire when he saw me, his countryman who had been taken prisoner, and hailed me with a cheer, as Captain Carton's boat ran in and took me on board.

I reported, "All escaped, sir! All well, all safe, all here!"

God bless me—and God bless them—what a cheer! It turned me weak, as I was passed on from hand to hand to the stern of

the boat: every hand patting me or grasping me in some way or other, in the moment of my going by.

"Hold up, my brave fellow," says Captain Carton, clapping me on the shoulder like a friend, and giving me a flask. "Put your lips to that, and they'll be red again. Now, boys, give way!"

The banks flew by us, as if the mightiest stream that ever ran was with us; and so it was, I am sure, meaning the stream to those men's ardour and spirit. The banks flew by us, and we came in sight of the rafts—the banks flew by us, and we came alongside of the rafts—the banks stopped; and there was a tumult of laughing and crying and kissing and shaking of hands, and catching up of children and setting of them down again, and a wild hurry of thankfulness and joy that melted every one and softened all hearts.

I had taken notice, in Captain Carton's boat, that there was a curious and quite new sort of fitting on board. It was a kind of a little bower made of flowers, and it was set up behind the capthin, and betwixt him and the rudder. Not only was this arbor, so to call it, neatly made of flowers, but it was ornamented in a singular way. Some of the men had taken the ribbons and buckles off their hats, and hung them among the flowers; others, had made festoons and streamers of their handkerchiefs, and hung them there; others, had intermixed such trifles as bits of glass and shining fragments of locketts and tobacco-boxes, with the flowers; so that altogether it was a very bright and lively object in the sunshine. But, why there, or what for, I did not understand.

Now, as soon as the first bewilderment was over, Captain Carton gave the order to land for the present. But, this boat of his, with two hands left in her, immediately put off again when the men were out of her, and kept off, some yards from the shore. As she floated there, with the two hands gently backing water to keep her from going down the stream, this pretty little arbor attracted many eyes. None of the boat's crew, however, had anything to say about it, except that it was the captain's fancy.

The captain, with the women and children clustering round him, and the men of all ranks grouped outside them, and all listening, stood telling how the Expedition, deceived by its bad intelligence, had chased the light Pirate boats all that fatal night, and had still followed in their wake next day, and had never suspected until many hours too late that the great Pirate body had drawn off in the darkness when the chase began, and shot over to the island. He stood telling how the Expedition, supposing the whole array of armed boats to be ahead of it, got tempted into shallows and went aground; but, not without having its revenge upon the two decoy-boats, both of which it had come up with, overland, and sent to the bottom.

with all on board. He stood telling how the Expedition, fearing then that the case stood as it did, got afloat again, by great exertion, after the loss of four more tides, and returned to the Island, where they found the sloop scuttled and the treasure gone. He stood telling how my officer, Lieutenant Linderwood, was left upon the Island, with as strong a force as could be got together hurriedly from the mainland, and how the three boats we saw before us were manned and armed and had come away, exploring the coast and inlets, in search of any tidings of us. He stood telling all this, with his face to the river; and, as he stood telling it, the little arbor of flowers floated in the sunshine before all the faces there.

Leaning on Captain Carton's shoulder, between him and Miss Maryon, was Mrs. Fisher, her head drooping on her arm. She asked him, without raising it, when he had told so much, whether he had found her mother?

"Be comforted! She lies," said the Captain, gently, "under the cocoa-nut trees on the beach."

"And my child, Captain Carton, did you find my child, too? Does my darling rest with my mother?"

"No. Your pretty child sleeps," said the Captain, "under a shade of flowers."

His voice shook; but, there was something in it that struck all the hearers. At that moment, there sprang from the arbor in his boat, a little creature, clapping her hands and stretching out her arms, and crying, "Dear papa! Dear mamma! I am not killed. I am saved. I am coming to kiss you. Take me to them, take me to them, good, kind sailors!"

Nobody who saw that scene has ever forgotten it, I am sure, or ever will forget it. The child had kept quite still, where her brave grandmama had put her (first whispering in her ear, "Whatever happens to me, do not stir, my dear!"), and had remained quiet until the fort was deserted; she had then crept out of the trench, and gone into her mother's house; and there, alone on the solitary Island, in her mother's room, and asleep on her mother's bed, the Captain had found her. Nothing could induce her to be parted from him after he took her up in his arms, and he had brought her away with him, and the men had made the bower for her. To see those men now, was a sight. The joy of the women was beautiful; the joy of those women who had lost their own children, was quite sacred and divine; but, the ecstasies of Captain Carton's boat's crew, when their pet was restored to her parents, were wonderful for the tenderness they showed in the midst of roughness. As the Captain stood with the child in his arms, and the child's own little arms now clinging round his neck, now round her father's, now round her mother's, now round some one who

pressed up to kiss her, the boat's crew shook hands with one another, waved their hats over their heads, laughed, sang, cried, danced—and all among themselves, without wanting to interfere with anybody—in a manner never to be represented. At last, I saw the coxswain and another, two very hard-faced men with grizzled heads who had been the heartiest of the hearty all along, close with one another, get each of them the other's head under his arm, and pummel away at it with his fist as hard as he could, in his excess of joy.

When we had well rested and refreshed ourselves—and very glad we were to have some of the heartening things to eat and drink that had come up in the boats—we recommenced our voyage down the river: rafts, and boats, and all. I said to myself, it was a very different kind of voyage now, from what it had been; and I felt into my proper place and station among my fellow-soldiers.

But, when we halted for the night, I found that Miss Maryon had spoken to Captain Carton concerning me. For, the Captain came straight up to me, and says he, "My brave fellow, you have been Miss Maryon's body-guard all along, and you shall remain so. Nobody shall supersede you in the distinction and pleasure of protecting that young lady." I thanked his honor in the fittest words I could find, and that night I was placed on my old post of watching the place where she slept. More than once in the night, I saw Captain Carton come out into the air, and stroll about there, to see that all was well. I have now this other singular confession to make, that I saw him with a heavy heart. Yes; I saw him with a heavy, heavy heart.

In the day-time, I had the like post in Captain Carton's boat. I had a special station of my own, behind Miss Maryon, and no hands but hers ever touched my wound. (It has been healed these many long years; but, no other hands have ever touched it.) Mr. Pordage was kept tolerably quiet now, with pen and ink, and began to pick up his senses a little. Seated in the second boat, he made documents with Mr. Kitten, pretty well all day; and he generally handed in a Protest about something whenever we stopped. The Captain, however, made so very light of these papers that it grew into a saying among the men, when one of them wanted a match for his pipe, "Hand us over a Protest, Jack!" As to Mrs. Pordage, she still wore the nightcap, and she now had cut all the ladies on account of her not having been formally and separately rescued by Captain Carton before anybody else. The end of Mr. Pordage, to bring to an end all I know about him, was, that he got great compliments at home for his conduct on these trying occasions, and that he died of yellow jaundice, a Governor and a K.C.B.

Serjeant Drooce had fallen from a high fever into a low one, Tom Packer—the only man who could have pulled the Serjeant

through it—kept hospital a-board the old raft, and Mrs. Belltott, as brisk as ever again (but the spirit of that little woman, when things tried it, was not equal to appearances), was head-nurse under his directions. Before we got down to the Mosquito coast, the joke had been made by one of our men, that we should see her gazetted Mrs. Tom Packer, *vice* Belltott exchanged.

When we reached the coast, we got native boats as substitutes for the rafts; and we rowed along under the land; and in that beautiful climate, and upon that beautiful water, the blooming days were like enchantment. Ah! They were running away, faster than any sea or river, and there was no tide to bring them back. We were coming very near the settlement where the people of Silver-Store were to be left, and from which we Marines were under orders to return to Belize.

Captain Carton had, in the boat by him, a curious long-barreled Spanish gun, and he had said to Miss Maryon one day that it was the best of guns, and had turned his head to me, and said:

"Gill Davis, load her fresh with a couple of slugs, against a chance of showing how good she is."

So, I had discharged the gun over the sea, and had loaded her, according to orders, and there it had lain at the Captain's feet, convenient to the Captain's hand.

The last day but one of our journey was an uncommonly hot day. We started very early; but, there was no cool air on the sea as the day got on, and by noon the heat was really hard to bear, considering that there were women and children to bear it. Now, we happened to open, just at that time, a very pleasant little cove or bay, where there was a deep shade from a great growth of trees. Now, the Captain, therefore, made the signal to the other boats to follow him in and lie by a while.

The men who were off duty went ashore, and lay down, but were ordered, for caution's sake, not to stray, and to keep within view. The others rested on their oars, and dozed. Awnings had been made of one thing and another, in all the boats, and the passengers found it cooler to be under them in the shade, when there was room enough, than to be in the thick woods. So, the passengers were all afloat, and mostly sleeping. I kept my post behind Miss Maryon, and she was on Captain Carton's right in the boat, and Mrs. Fisher sat on her right again. The Captain had Mrs. Fisher's daughter on his knee. He and the two ladies were talking about the Pirates, and were talking softly: partly, because people do talk softly under such indolent circumstances, and partly because the little girl had gone off asleep.

I think I have before given it out for my Lady to write down, that Captain Carton had

a fine bright eye of his own. All at once, he darted me a side look, as much as to say. "Steady—don't take on—I see something!"—and gave the child into her mother's arms. That eye of his was so easy to understand, that I obeyed it by not so much as looking either to the right or to the left out of a corner of my own, or changing my attitude the least trifle. The Captain went on talking in the same mild and easy way; but began—with his arms resting across his knees, and his head a little hanging forward, as if the heat were rather too much for him—began to play with the Spanish gun.

"They had laid their plans, you see," says the Captain, taking up the Spanish gun across his knees, and looking, lazily, at the inlaying on the stock, "with a great deal of art; and the corrupt or blundering local authorities were so easily deceived;" he ran his left hand idly along the barrel, but I saw, with my breath held, that he covered the action of cocking the gun with his right—"so easily deceived, that they summoned us out to come into the trap. But my intention as to future operations—" In a flash the Spanish gun was at his bright eye, and he fired.

All started up; innumerable echoes repeated the sound of the discharge; a cloud of bright-colored birds flew out of the woods screaming; a handful of leaves were scattered in the place where the shot had struck; a crackling of branches was heard; and some lithe but heavy creature sprang into the air, and fell forward, head down, over the muddy bank.

"What is it?" cries Captain Maryon from his boat. All silent then, but the echoes rolling away.

"It is a Traitor and a Spy," said Captain Carton, handing me the gun to load again. "And I think the other name of the animal is Christian George King!"

Shot through the heart. Some of the people ran round to the spot, and drew him out, with the slime and wet trickling down his face; but, his face itself would never stir any more to the end of time.

"Leave him hanging to that tree," cried Captain Carton; his boat's crew giving way, and he leaping ashore. "But first into this wood, every man in his place. And boats! Out of gunshot!"

It was a quick change, well meant and well made, though it ended in disappointment. No Pirates were there; no one but the Spy was found. It was supposed that the Pirates, unable to retake us, and expecting a great attack upon them, to be the consequence of our escape, had made from the ruins in the Forest, taken to their ship along with the Treasure, and left the Spy to pick up what intelligence he could. In the evening, we went away, and he was left hanging to the tree, all alone, with the red sun making a kind of a dead sunset on his black face.

Next day, we gained the settlement on the

Mosquito coast for which we were bound. Having stayed there to refresh, seven days, and having been much commended, and high y spoken of, and finely entertained, we Marines stood under orders to march from the Town-Gate (it was neither much of a town nor much of a gate), at five in the morning.

My officer had joined us before then. When we turned out at the gate, all the people were there; in the front of them all those who had been our fellow-prisoners, and all the seamen.

"Davis," says Lieutenant Linderwood. "Stand out, my friend!"

I stood out from the ranks, and Miss Maryon and Captain Carton came up to me.

"Dear Davis," says Miss Maryon, while the tears fell fast down her face, "your grateful friends, in most unwillingly taking leave of you, ask the favour that, while you bear away with you their affectionate remembrance which nothing can ever impair, you will also take this purse of money—far more valuable to you, we all know, for the deep attachment and thankfulness with which it is offered, than for its own contents, though we hope those may prove useful to you, too, in after life."

I got out, in answer, that I thankfully accepted the attachment and affection, but not the money. Captain Carton looked at me very attentively, and stepped back, and moved away. I made him my bow as he stepped back, to thank him for being so delicate.

"No, miss," said I, "I think it would break my heart to accept of money. But, if you could condescend to give to a man so ignorant and common as myself, any little thing you have worn—such as a bit of ribbon—"

She took a ring from her finger, and put it in my hand. And she rested her hand in mine, while she said these words:

"The brave gentlemen of old—but not one of them was braver, or had a nobler nature than you—took such gifts from ladies, and did all their good actions for the givers' sakes. If you will do yours for mine, I shali think with pride that I continue to have some share in the life of a gallant and generous man."

For the second time in my life, she kissed my hand. I made so bold, for the first time, as to kiss hers; and I tied the ring at my breast, and I fell back to my place.

Then, the horse-litter went out at the gate, with Serjeant Drooce in it; and the horse-litter went out at the gate with Mrs. Belltott in it; and Lieutenant Linderwood gave the word of command, "Quick march!" and, cheered and cried for, we went out of the gate too, marching along the level plain towards the serene blue sky as if we were marching straight to Heaven.

When I have added here that the Pirate scheme was blown to shivers, by the Pirate-ship which had the Treasure on board being so vigorously attacked by one of His Majesty's cruisers, among the West India Keys, and being so swiftly boarded and carried, that nobody suspected anything about the scheme until three-fourths of the Pirates were killed, and the other fourth were in irons, and the Treasure was recovered; I come to the last singular confession I have got to make.

It is this. I well knew what an immense and hopeless distance there was between me and Miss Maryon; I well knew that I was no fitter company for her than I was for the angels; I well knew that she was as high above my reach as the sky over my head; and yet I loved her. What put it in my low heart to be so daring, or whether such a thing ever happened before or since, as that a man so uninstructed and obscure as myself got his unhappy thoughts lifted up to such a height, while knowing very well how presumptuous and impossible to be realised they were, I am unable to say; still, the suffering to me was just as great as if I had been a gentleman. I suffered agony—agony. I suffered hard, and I suffered long. I thought of her last words to me, however, and I never disgraced them. If it had not been for those dear words, I think I should have lost myself in despair and recklessness.

The ring will be found lying on my heart, of course, and will be laid with me wherever I am laid. I am getting on in years now, though I am able and hearty. I was recommended for promotion, and everything was done to reward me that could be done; but, my total want of all learning stood in my way, and I found myself so completely out of the road to it, that I could not conquer any learning, though I tried. I was long in the service, and I respected it, and was respected in it, and the service is dear to me at this present hour.

At this present hour, when I give this out to my Lady to be written down, all my old pain has softened away, and I am as happy as a man can be, at this present fine old country-house of Admiral Sir George Carton, Baronet. It was my Lady Carton who herself sought me out, over a great many miles of the wide world, and found me in Hospital wounded, and brought me here. It is my Lady Carton who writes down my words. My Lady was Miss Maryon. And now, that I conclude what I had to tell, I see my Lady's honored grey hair droop over her face, as she leans a little lower at her desk; and I fervently thank her for being so tender as I see she is, towards the past pain and trouble of her poor, old, faithful, humble soldier.

A HOUSE TO LET.

BEING THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD WORDS

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF ONE REGULAR NUMBER AND A HALF.

CHRISTMAS, 1858.

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OVER THE WAY. .

I HAD been living at Tambridge Wells and nowhere else, going on for ten years, when my-medical man—very clever in his profession, and the prettiest player I ever saw in my life of a hand at Long Whist, which was a noble and a princely game before Short was heard of—said to me, one day, as he sat feeling my pulse on the actual sofa which my poor dear sister Jane worked before her spine came on, and laid her on a board for fifteen months at a stretch—the most upright woman that ever lived—said to me, “What we want, ma’am, is a fillip.”

“Good gracious, goodness gracious, Doctor Towers!” says I, quite startled at the man, for he was so christened himself: “don’t talk as if you were alluding to people’s names; but say what you mean.”

“I mean, my dear ma’am, that we want a little change of air and scene.”

“Bless the man!” said I; “does he mean we or me?”

“I mean you, ma’am.”

“Then Lard, forgive you, Doctor Towers,” I said; “why don’t you get into a habit of expressing yourself in a straightforward manner, like a loyal subject of our gracious Queen Victoria, and a member of the Church of England?”

Towers laughed, as he generally does when he has fidgetted me into any of my impatient ways—one of my states, as I call them—and then he began,—

“Tone, ma’am, Tone, is all you require!” He appealed to Trottle, who just then came in with the coal-scuttle, looking, in his nice black suit, like an amiable man putting on coals from motives of benevolence.

Trottle (whom I always call my right hand) has been in my service two and thirty years. He entered my service, far away from

England. He is the best of creatures, and the most respectable of men; but, opinionated.

“What you want, ma’am,” says Trottle, making up the fire in his quiet and skilful way, “is Tone.”

“Lard forgive you both!” says I, bursting out a-laughing; “I see you are in a conspiracy against me, so I suppose you must do what you like with me, and take me to London for a change.”

For some weeks Towers had hinted at London, and consequently I was prepared for him. When we had got to this point, we got on so expeditiously, that Trottle was packed off to London next day but one, to find some sort of place for me to lay my troublesome old head in.

Trottle came back to me at the Wells after two days’ absence, with accounts of a charming place that could be taken for six months certain, with liberty to renew on the same terms for another six, and which really did afford every accommodation that I wanted.

“Could you really find no fault at all in the rooms, Trottle?” I asked him.

“Not a single one, ma’am. They are exactly suitable to you. There is not a fault in them. There is but one fault outside of them.”

“And what’s that?”

“They are opposite a House to Let.”

“O!” I said, considering of it. “But is that such a very great objection?”

“I think it my duty to mention it, ma’am. It is a dull object to look at. Otherwise, I as so greatly pleased with the lodging that, I should have closed with the terms at once, as I had your authority to do.”

Trottle thinking so highly of the place, in my interest, I wished not to disappoint him. Consequently I said:—

“The empty House may let, perhaps.”

"O, dear no, ma'am," said Trottle, shaking his head with decision; "it won't let. It never does let, ma'am."

"Mercy me! Why not?"

"Nobody knows, ma'am. All I have to mention is, ma'am, that the House won't let."

"How long has this unfortunate House been to let, in the name of Fortune?" said I.

"Ever so long," said Trottle. "Years."

"Is it in ruins?"

"It's a good deal out of repair, ma'am, but it's not in ruins."

The long and the short of this business was, that next day I had a pair of post-horses put to my chariot—for, I never travel by railway: not that I have anything to say against railways, except that they came in when I was too old to take to them; and that they made ducks and drakes of a few turnpike-bonds I had—and so I went up myself, with Trottle in the rumble, to look at the inside of this same lodging, and at the outside of this same House.

As I say, I went and saw for myself. The lodging was perfect. That, I was sure it would be; because Trottle is the best judge of comfort I know. The empty house was an eyesore; and that I was sure it would be too, for the same reason. However, setting the one thing against the other, the good against the bad, the lodging very soon got the victory over the House. My lawyer, Mr. Squares, of Crown Office Row, Temple, drew up an agreement; which his young man jabbered over so dreadfully when he read it to me, that I didn't understand one word of it except my own name; and hardly that, and I signed it, and the other party signed it, and, in three weeks' time, I moved my old bones, bag and baggage, up to London.

For the first month or so, I arranged to leave Trottle at the Wells. I made this arrangement, not only because there was a good deal to take care of in the way of my school-children and pensioners, and also of a new stove in the hall to air the house in my absence, which appeared to me calculated to blow up and burst; but, likewise because I suspect Trottle (though the steadiest of men, and a widower between sixty and seventy) to be what I call rather a Philanderer. I mean, that when any friend comes down to see me and brings a maid, Trottle is always remarkably ready to show that maid the Wells of an evening; and that I have more than once noticed the shadow of his arm, outside the room door nearly opposite my chair, encircling that maid's waist on the landing, like a table-cloth brush.

Therefore, I thought it just as well, before any London Philandering took place, that I should have a little time to look round me, and to see what girls were in and about the place. So, nobody stayed with me in my new lodging at first after Trottle had established

me there safe and sound, but Peggy Flobbins, my maid; a most affectionate and attached woman, who never was an object of Philandering since I have known her, and is not likely to begin to become so after nine-and-twenty years next March.

It was the fifth of November when I first breakfasted in my new rooms. The Guys were going about in the brown fog, like magnified monsters of insects in table-beer, and there was a Guy resting on the doorsteps of the House to Let. I put on my glasses, partly to see how the boys were pleased with what I sent them out by Peggy, and partly to make sure that she didn't approach too near the ridiculous object, which of course was full of sky-rockets, and might go off into bangs at any moment. In this way it happened that the first time I ever looked at the House to Let, after I became its opposite neighbour, I had my glasses on. And this might not have happened once in fifty times, for my sight is uncommonly good for my time of life; and I wear glasses as little as I can, for fear of spoiling it.

I knew already that it was a ten-roomed house, very dirty and much dilapidated; that the area-rails were rusty and peeling away, and that two or three of them were wanting, or half-wanting; that there were broken panes of glass in the windows, and blotches of mud on other panes, which the boys had thrown at them; that there was quite a collection of stones in the area, also proceeding from those Young Mischiefs; that there were games chalked on the pavement before the house, and likenesses of ghosts chalked on the street-door; that the windows were all darkened by rotting old blinds, or shutters, or both; that the bills "To Let," had curled up, as if the damp air of the place had given them cramps; or had dropped down into corners, as if they were no more. I had seen all this on my first visit, and I had remarked to Trottle, that the lower part of the black board about terms was split away; that the rest had become illegible, and that the very stone of the door-steps was broken across. Notwithstanding, I sat at my breakfast table on that Please to Remember the fifth of November morning, staring at the House through my glasses, as if I had never looked at it before.

All at once—in the first-floor window on my right—down in a low corner, at a hole in a blind or a shutter—I found that I was looking at a secret Eye. The reflection of my fire may have touched it and made it shine; but, I saw it shine and vanish.

The eye might have seen me, or it might not have seen me, sitting there in the glow of my fire—you can take which probability you prefer, without offence—but something struck through my frame, as if the sparkle of this eye had been electric, and had flashed straight at me. It had such an effect upon me, that I could not remain by myself, and I

rang for Flobbins, and invented some little jobs for her, to keep her in the room. After my breakfast was cleared away, I sat in the same place with my glasses on, moving my head, now so, and now so, trying whether, with the shining of my fire and the flaws in the window-glass, I could re-produce any sparkle seeming to be up there, that was like the sparkle of an eye. But no; I could make nothing like it. I could make ripples and crooked lines in the front of the House to Let, and I could even twist one window up and loop it into another; but, I could make no eye, nor anything like an eye. So I convinced myself that I really had seen an eye.

Well, to be sure I could not get rid of the impression of this eye, and it troubled me and troubled me, until it was almost a torment. I don't think I was previously inclined to concern my head much about the opposite House; but, after this eye, my head was full of the house; and I thought of little else than the house, and I watched the house, and I talked about the house, and I dreamed of the house. In all this, I fully believe now, there was a good Providence. But, you will judge for yourself about that, bye-and-bye.

My landlord was a butler, who had married a cook, and set up housekeeping. They had not kept house longer than a couple of years, and they knew no more about the House to Let than I did. Neither could I find out anything concerning it among the tradespeople or otherwise; further than what Trottle had told me at first. It had been empty, some said six years, some said eight, some said ten. It never did let, they all agreed, and it never would let.

I soon felt convinced that I should work myself into one of my states about the House; and I soon did. I lived for a whole month in a flurry, that was always getting worse. Towers's prescriptions, which I had brought to London with me, were of no more use than nothing. In the cold winter sunlight, in the thick winter fog, in the black winter rain, in the white winter snow, the House was equally on my mind. I have heard, as everybody else has, of a spirit's haunting a house; but I have had my own personal experience of a house's haunting a spirit; for that House haunted mine.

In all that month's time, I never saw anyone go into the House nor come out of the House. I supposed that such a thing must take place sometimes, in the dead of the night, or the glimmer of the morning; but, I never saw it done. I got no relief from having my curtains drawn when it came on dark, and shutting out the house. The Eye then began to shine in my fire.

I am a single old woman. I should say at once, without being at all afraid of the name, I am an old maid; only that I am older than the phrase would express. The time was when I had my love-trouble, but it is

long and long ago. He was killed at sea (Dear Heaven rest his blessed head!) when I was twenty-five. I have all my life, since ever I can remember, been deeply fond of children. I have always felt such a love for them, that I have had my sorrowful and sinful times when I have fancied something must have gone wrong in my life—something must have been turned aside from its original intention I mean—or I should have been the proud and happy mother of many children, and a fond old grandmother this day. I have soon known better in the cheerfulness and contentment that God has blessed me with and given me abundant reason for; and yet I have had to dry my eyes even then, when I have thought of my dear, brave, hopeful, handsome, bright-eyed Charley, and the trust he meant to cheer me with. Charley was my youngest brother, and he went to India. He married there, and sent his gentle little wife home to me to be confined, and she was to go back to him, and the baby was to be left with me, and I was to bring it up. It never belonged to this life. It took its silent place among the other incidents in my story that might have been, but never were. I had hardly time to whisper to her "Dead my own!" or she to answer, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust! O lay it on my breast and comfort Charley!" when she had gone to seek her baby at Our Saviour's feet. I went to Charley, and I told him there was nothing left but me, poor me; and I lived with Charley, out there, several years. He was a man of fifty, when he fell asleep in my arms. His face had changed to be almost old and a little stern; but, it softened, and softened when I laid it down that I might cry and pray beside it; and, when I looked at it for the last time, it was my dear, untroubled, handsome, youthful Charley of long ago.

—I was going on to tell that the loneliness of the House to Let brought back all these recollections, and that they had quite pierced my heart one evening, when Flobbins, opening the door, and looking very much as if she wanted to laugh but thought better of it, said:

"Mr. Jabez Jarber, ma'am!"

Upon which Mr. Jarber ambled in, in his usual absurd way, saying:

"Sophonisba!"

Which I am obliged to confess is my name. A pretty one and proper one enough when it was given to me: but, a good many years out of date now, and always sounding particularly high-flown and comical from his lips. So I said, sharply:

"Though it is Sophonisba, Jarber, you are not obliged to mention it, that I see."

In reply to this observation, the ridiculous man put the tips of my five right-hand fingers to his lips, and said again, with an aggravating accent on the third syllable:

"Sophonisba!"

I don't burn lamps, because I can't abide

the smell of oil, and wax candles belonged to my day. I hope the convenient situation of one of my tall old candlesticks on the table at my elbow will be my excuse for saying, that if he did that again, I would chop his toes with it. (I am sorry to add that when I told him so, I knew his toes to be tender.) But, really, at my time of life and at Jarber's, it is too much of a good thing. There is an orchestra still standing in the open air at the Wells, before which, in the presence of a throng of fine company, I have walked a minuet with Jarber. But, there is a house still standing, in which I have sworn a pinafore, and had a tooth drawn by fastening a thread to the tooth and the door-handle, and toddling away from the door. And how should I look now, at my years, in a pinafore, or having a door for my dentist?

Besides, Jarber always was more or less an absurd man. He was sweetly dressed, and beautifully perfumed, and many girls of my day would have given their ears for him; though I am bound to add that he never cared a fig for them, or their advances either, and that he was very constant to me. For, he not only proposed to me before my love-happiness ended in sorrow, but afterwards too: not once, nor yet twice: nor will we say how many times. However many they were, or however few they were, the last time he paid me that compliment was immediately after he had presented me with a digestive dinner-pill stuck on the point of a pin. And I said on that occasion, laughing heartily, "Now, Jarber, if you don't know that two people whose united ages would make about a hundred and fifty, have got to be old, I do; and I beg to swallow this nonsense in the form of this pill," (which I took on the spot), "and I request to hear no more of it."

After that, he conducted himself pretty well. He was always a little squeezed man, was Jarber, in little sprigged waistcoats; and he had always little legs and a little smile, and a little voice, and little round-about ways. As long as I can remember him he was always going little errands for people, and carrying little gossip. At this present time when he called me "Sophonisba!" he had a little old-fashioned lodging in that new neighbourhood of mine. I had not seen him for two or three years, but I had heard that he still went out with a little perspective-glass and stood on door-steps in Saint James's Street, to see the mobility go to Court; and went in his little cloak and goloshes outside Willis's rooms to see them go to Almack's; and caught the frightfullest colds, and got himself trodden upon by coachmen and linkmen, until he went home to his landlady a mass of bruises, and had to be nursed for a month.

Jarber took off his little fur-collared cloak, and sat down opposite me, with his little cane and hat in his hand.

"Let us have no more Sophonisbaing, if

you please, Jarber," I said. "Call me Sarah. How do you do? I hope you are pretty well."

"Thank you. And you?" said Jarber.

"I am as well as an old woman can expect to be."

Jarber was beginning:

"Say, not old, Sophon—" but I looked at the candlestick, and he left off; pretending not to have said anything.

"I am infirm, of course," I said, "and so are you. Let us both be thankful it's no worse."

"Is it possible that you look worried?" said Jarber.

"It is very possible. I have no doubt it is the fact."

"And what has worried my Soph—, soft-hearted friend," said Jarber.

"Something not easy, I suppose, to comprehend. I am worried to death by a House to Let, over the way."

Jarber went with his little tip-toe step to the window-curtains, peeped out, and looked round at me.

"Yes," said I, in answer: "that house."

After peeping out again, Jarber came back to his chair with a tender air, and asked: "How does it worry you, S—arah?"

"It is a mystery to me," said I. "Of course every house is a mystery, more or less; but, something that I don't care to mention" (for truly the Eye was so slight a thing to mention that I was more than half ashamed of it), "has made that House so mysterious to me, and has so fixed it in my mind, that I have had no peace for a month. I foresee that I shall have no peace, either, until Trottle comes to me, next Monday."

I might have mentioned before, that there is a long-standing jealousy between Trottle and Jarber; and that there is never any love lost between those two.

"Trottle," petulantly repeated Jarber, with a little flourish of his cane; "how is Trottle to restore the lost peace of Sarah?"

"He will exert himself to find out something about the House. I have fallen into that state about it, that I really must discover by some means or other, good or bad, fair or foul, how and why it is that that House remains To Let."

"And why Trottle? Why not," putting his little hat to his heart; "why not, Jarber?"

"To tell you the truth, I have never thought of Jarber in the matter. And now I do think of Jarber, through your having the kindness to suggest him—for which I am really and truly obliged to you—I don't think he could do it."

"Sarah!"

"I think it would be too much for you, Jarber."

"Sarah!"

"There would be coming and going, and etching and carrying, Jarber, and you might catch cold."

"Sarah! What can be done by Trottle, can be done by me. I am on terms of acquaintance with every person of responsibility in this parish. I am intimate at the Circulating Library. I converse daily with the Assessed Taxes. I lodge with the Water Rate. I know the Medical Man. I lounge habitually at the House Agent's. I dine with the Churchwardens. I move to the Guardians. Trottle! A person in the sphere of a domestic, and totally unknown to society!"

"Don't be warm, Jarber. In mentioning Trottle, I have naturally relied on my Right-Hand, who would take any trouble to gratify even a whim of his old mistress's. But, if you can find out anything to help to unravel the mystery of this House to Let, I shall be fully as much obliged to you as if there was never a Trottle in the land."

Jarber rose and put on his little cloak. A couple of fierce brass lions held it tight round his little throat; but a couple of the mildest Hares might have done that, I am sure. "Sarah," he said, "I go. Expect me on Monday evening, the Sixth, when perhaps you will give me a cup of tea;—may I ask for no Green? Adieu!"

This was on a Thursday, the second of December. When I reflected that Trottle would come back on Monday, too, I had my misgivings as to the difficulty of keeping the two powers from open warfare, and indeed I was more uneasy than I quite like to confess. However, the empty House swallowed up that thought next morning, as it swallowed up most other thoughts now, and the House quite preyed upon me all that day, and all the Saturday.

It was a very wet Sunday: raining and blowing from morning to night. When the bells rang for afternoon church, they seemed to ring in the commotion of the puddles as well as in the wind, and they sounded very loud and dismal indeed, and the street looked very dismal indeed, and the House looked dimmallest of all.

I was reading my prayers near the light, and my fire was glowing in the darkening window-glass, when, looking up, as I prayed for the fatherless children and widows and all who were desolate and oppressed,—I saw the Eye again. It passed in a moment, as it had done before; but, this time, I was inwardly more convinced that I had seen it.

Well to be sure, I had a night that night! Whenever I closed my own eyes, it was to see eyes. Next morning, at an unreasonably, and I should have said (but for that railroad) an impossibly early hour, comes Trottle. As soon as he had told me all about the Wells, I told him all about the House. He listened with as great interest and attention as I could possibly wish, until I came to Jabez Jarber, when he cooled in an instant, and became opinionated.

"Now, Trottle," I said, pretending not to notice, "when Mr. Jarber comes back this

evening, we must all lay our heads together."

"I should hardly think that would be wanted, ma'am; Mr. Jarber's head is surely equal to anything."

Being determined not to notice, I said again, that we must all lay our heads together.

"Whatever you order, ma'am, shall be obeyed. Still, it cannot be doubted, I should think, that Mr. Jarber's head is equal, if not superior, to any pressure that can be brought to bear upon it."

This was provoking; and his way, when he came in and out all through the day, or pretending not to see the House to Let, was more provoking still. However, being quite resolved not to notice, I gave no sign whatever that I did notice. But, when evening came, and he showed in Jarber, and, when Jarber wouldn't be helped off with his cloak, and poked his cane into cane chair-backs and china ornaments and his own eye, in trying to unclasp his brazen lions of himself (which he couldn't do, after all) I could have shaken them both.

As it was, I only shook the tea-pot, and made the tea. Jarber had brought from under his cloak, a roll of paper, with which he had triumphantly pointed over the way, like the Ghost of Hamlet's Father appearing to the late Mr. Kemble, and which he had laid on the table.

"A discovery?" said I, pointing to it, when he was seated, and had got his tea-cup.—"Don't go, Trottle."

"The first of a series of discoveries," answered Jarber. "Account of a former tenant, compiled from the Water-Rate, and Medical Man."

"Don't go, Trottle," I repeated. For, I saw him making imperceptibly to the door.

"Begging your pardon, ma'am, I might be in Mr. Jarber's way?"

Jarber looked that he decidedly thought he might be. I relieved myself with a good angry croak, and said—always determined not to notice:

"Have the goodness to sit down, if you please, Trottle. I wish you to hear this."

Trottle bowed in the stiffest manner, and took the remotest chair he could find. Even that, he moved close to the draught from the keyhole of the door.

"Firstly," Jarber began, after sipping his tea, "would my Sophon—"

"Begin again, Jarber," said I.

"Would you be much surprised, if this House to Let, should turn out to be the property of a relation of your own?"

"I should indeed be very much surprised."

"Then it belongs to your first cousin (I learn, by the way, that he is ill at this time), George Forley."

"Then that is a bad beginning. I cannot deny that George Forley stands in the relation of first cousin to me; but I hold no

communication with him. George Forley has been a hard, bitter, stony father to a child now dead. George Forley was most implacable and unrelenting to one of his two daughters who made a poor marriage. George Forley brought all the weight of his hand to bear as heavily against that crushed thing, as he brought it to bear lightly, favouringly, and advantageously upon her sister, who made a rich marriage. I hope that, with the measure George Forley meted, it may not be measured out to him again. I will give George Forley no worse wish."

I was strong upon the subject, and I could not keep the tears out of my eyes; for, that young girl's was a cruel story, and I had dropped many a tear over it before.

"The house being George Forley's," said I, "is almost enough to account for there being a Fate upon it, if Fate there is. Is there anything about George Forley in those sheets of paper?"

"Not a word."

"I am glad to hear it. Please to read on. Trotter, why don't you come nearer? Why do you sit mortifying yourself in those Arctic regions? Come nearer."

"Thank you, ma'am; I am quite near enough to Mr. Jarber."

Jarber rounded his chair, to get his back full to my opinionated friend and servant, and, beginning to read, tossed the words at him over his (Jabez Jarber's) own ear and shoulder.

He read what follows:

THE MANCHESTER MARRIAGE.

Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw came from Manchester to London and took the House To Let. He had been, what is called in Lancashire, a Salesman for a large manufacturing firm, who were extending their business, and opening a warehouse in London; where Mr. Openshaw was now to superintend the business. He rather enjoyed the change of residence; having a kind of curiosity about London, which he had never yet been able to gratify in his brief visits to the metropolis. At the same time he had an odd, shrewd, contempt for the inhabitants; whom he had always pictured to himself as fine, lazy people; caring nothing but for fashion and aristocracy, and lounging away their days in Bond Street, and such places; ruining good English, and ready in their turn to despise him as a provincial. The hours that the men of business kept in the city scandalised him too; accustomed as he was to the early dinners of Manchester folk, and the consequently far longer evenings. Still, he was pleased to go to London; though he would not for the world have confessed it, even to himself, and always spoke of the step to his friends as one demanded of him by the interests of his employers, and sweetened to him by a considerable increase

of salary. His salary indeed was so liberal that he might have been justified in taking a much larger House than this one, had he not thought himself bound to set an example to Londoners of how little a Manchester man of business cared for show. Inside, however, he furnished the House with an unusual degree of comfort, and, in the winter time, he insisted on keeping up as large fires as the grates would allow, in every room where the temperature was in the least chilly. Moreover, his northern sense of hospitality was such, that, if he were at home, he could hardly suffer a visitor to leave the house without forcing meat and drink upon him. Every servant in the house was well warmed, well fed, and kindly treated; for their master scorned all petty saving in aught that conduced to comfort; while he amused himself by following out all his accustomed habits and individual ways in defiance of what any of his new neighbours might think.

His wife was a pretty, gentle woman, of suitable age and character. He was forty-two, she thirty-five. He was loud and decided; she soft and yielding. They had two children; or rather, I should say, she had two; for the elder, a girl of eleven, was Mrs. Openshaw's child by Frank Wilson her first husband. The younger was a little boy, Edwin, who could just prattle, and to whom his father delighted to speak in the broadest and most unintelligible Lancashire dialect, in order to keep up what he called the true Saxon accent.

Mrs. Openshaw's Christian-name was Alice, and her first husband had been her own cousin. She was the orphan niece of a sea-captain in Liverpool: a quiet, grave little creature, of great personal attraction when she was fifteen or sixteen, with regular features and a blooming complexion. But she was very shy, and believed herself to be very stupid and awkward; and was frequently scolded by her aunt, her own uncle's second wife. So when her cousin, Frank Wilson, came home from a long absence at sea, and first was kind and protective to her; secondly, attentive; and thirdly, desperately in love with her, she hardly knew how to be grateful enough to him. It is true she would have preferred his remaining in the first or second stages of behaviour; for his violent love puzzled and frightened her. Her uncle neither helped nor hindered the love affair; though it was going on under his own eyes. Frank's step-mother had such a variable temper, that there was no knowing whether what she liked one day she would like the next, or not. At length she went to such extremes of crossness, that Alice was only too glad to shut her eyes and rush blindly at the chance of escape from domestic tyranny offered her by a marriage with her cousin; and, liking him better than any one in the world except her uncle (who was at this time at sea) she went off one morning and was married to him; her only bridesmaid being the housemaid at her

aunt's. The consequence was, that Frank and his wife went into lodgings, and Mrs. Wilson refused to see them, and turned away Norah, the warm-hearted housemaid; whom they accordingly took into their service. When Captain Wilson returned from his voyage, he was very cordial with the young couple, and spent many an evening at their lodgings; smoking his pipe, and sipping his grog; but he told them that, for quietness' sake, he could not ask them to his own house; for his wife was bitter against them. They were not very unhappy about this.

The seed of future unhappiness lay rather in Frank's vehement, passionate disposition; which led him to resent his wife's shyness and want of demonstration as failures in conjugal duty. He was already tormenting himself, and her too, in a slighter degree, by apprehensions and imaginations of what might befall her during his approaching absence at sea. At last he went to his father and urged him to insist upon Alice's being once more received under his roof; the more especially as there was now a prospect of her confinement while her husband was away on his voyage. Captain Wilson was, as he himself expressed it, "breaking up," and unwilling to undergo the excitement of a scene; yet he felt that what his son said was true. So he went to his wife. And before Frank went to sea, he had the comfort of seeing his wife installed in her old little garret in his father's house. To have placed her in the one best spare room was a step beyond Mrs. Wilson's powers of submission or generosity. The worst part about it, however, was that the faithful Norah had to be dismissed. Her place as housemaid had been filled up; and, even had it not, she had forfeited Mrs. Wilson's good opinion for ever. She comforted her young master and mistress by pleasant prophecies of the time when they would have a household of their own; of which, in whatever service she might be in the meantime, she should be sure to form part. Almost the last action Frank Wilson did, before setting sail, was going with Alice to see Norah once more at her mother's house. And then he went away.

Alice's father-in-law grew more and more feeble as winter advanced. She was of great use to her step-mother in nursing and amusing him; and, although there was anxiety enough in the household, there was perhaps more of peace than there had been for years; for Mrs. Wilson had not a bad heart, and was softened by the visible approach of death to one whom she loved, and touched by the lonely condition of the young creature, expecting her first confinement in her husband's absence. To this relenting mood Norah owed the permission to come and nurse Alice when her baby was born, and to remain to attend on Captain Wilson.

Before one letter had been received from Frank (who had sailed for the East Indies and China), his father died. Alice was

always glad to remember that he had held her baby in his arms, and kissed, and blessed it before his death. After that, and the consequent examination into the state of his affairs, it was found that he had left far less property than people had been led by his style of living to imagine; and, what money there was, was all settled upon his wife, and at her disposal after her death. This did not signify much to Alice, as Frank was now first mate of his ship, and, in another voyage or two, would be captain. Meanwhile he had left her some hundreds (all his savings) in the bank.

It became time for Alice to hear from her husband. One letter from the Cape she had already received. The next was to announce his arrival in India. A week after week passed over, and no intelligence of the ship's arrival reached the office of the owners, and the Captain's wife was in the same state of ignorant suspense as Alice herself, her fears grew most oppressive. At length the day came when, in reply to her inquiry at the Shipping Office, they told her that the owners had given up hope of ever hearing more of the Betsy-Jane, and had sent in their claim upon the Underwriters. Now that he was gone for ever, she first felt a yearning, longing love for the kind cousin, the dear friend, the sympathising protector, whom she should never see again,—first felt a passionate desire to show him his child, whom she had hitherto rather craved to have all to herself—her own sole possession. Her grief was, however, noiseless, and quiet—rather to the scandal of Mrs. Wilson; who bewailed her step-son as if he and she had always lived together in perfect harmony, and who evidently thought it her duty to burst into fresh tears at every strange face she saw; dwelling on his poor young widow's desolate state, and the helplessness of the fatherless child, with an unaction, as if she liked the excitement of the sorrowful story.

So passed away the first days of Alice's widowhood. Bye-and-bye things subsided into their natural and tranquil course. But, as if this young creature was always to be in some heavy trouble, her ewe-lamb, began to be ailing, pining and sickly. The child's mysterious illness turned out to be some affection of the spine likely to affect health; but not to shorten life—at least so the doctors said. But the long dreary suffering of one whom a mother loves as Alice loved her only child, is hard to look forward to. Only Norah guessed what Alice suffered; no one but God knew.

And so it fell out, that when Mrs. Wilson, the elder, came to her one day in violent distress, occasioned by a very material diminution in the value of the property that her husband had left her,—a diminution which made her income barely enough to support herself, much less Alice—the latter could hardly understand how anything which did

not touch health or life could cause such grief; and she received the intelligence with irritating composure. But when, that afternoon, the little sick child was brought in, and the grandmother—who after all loved it well—began a fresh moan over her losses to its unconscious ears—saying how she had planned to consult this or that doctor, and to give it this or that comfort or luxury in after years, but that now all chance of this had passed away—Alice's heart was touched, and she drew near to Mrs. Wilson with unwonted caresses, and, in a spirit not unlike to that of Ruth, entreated, that come what would, they might remain together. After much discussion in succeeding days, it was arranged that Mrs. Wilson should take a house in Manchester, furnishing it partly with what furniture she had, and providing the rest with Alice's remaining two hundred pounds. Mrs. Wilson was herself a Manchester woman, and naturally longed to return to her native town; Some connexions of her own at that time required lodgings, for which they were willing to pay pretty handsomely. Alice undertook the active superintendence and superior work of the household. Norah, willing faithful Norah, offered to cook, scour, do anything in short, so that she might but remain with them.

The plan succeeded. For some years their first lodgers remained with them, and all went smoothly,—with the one sad exception of the little girl's increasing deformity. How that mother loved that child, is not for words to tell!

Then came a break of misfortune. Their lodgers left, and no one succeeded to them. After some months they had to remove to a smaller house; and Alice's tender conscience was torn by the idea that she ought not to be a burden to her mother-in-law, but ought to go out and seek her own maintenance. And leave her child! The thought came like the sweeping boom of a funeral bell over her heart.

Bye-and-bye, Mr. Openshaw came to lodge with them. He had started in life as the errand-boy and sweeper-out of a warehouse; had struggled up through all the grades of employment in the place, fighting his way through the hard striving Manchester life with strong pushing energy of character. Every spare moment of time had been sternly given up to self-teaching. He was a capital accountant, a good French and German scholar, a keen, far-seeing, tradesman; understanding markets, and the bearing of events, both near and distant, on trade; and yet, with such vivid attention to present details, that I do not think he ever saw a group of flowers in the fields without thinking whether their colours would, or would not, form harmonious contrasts in the coming spring's muslins and prints. He went to debating societies, and threw himself with all his heart and soul into politics; esteeming, it must be owned, every man a fool or a knave

who differed from him, and overthrowing his opponents rather by the loud strength of his language than the calm strength of his logic. There was something of the Yankee in all this. Indeed his theory ran parallel to the famous Yankee motto—"England flogs creation, and Manchester flogs England." Such a man, as may be fancied, had had no time for falling in love, or any such nonsense. At the age when most young men go through their courting and matrimony, he had not the means of keeping a wife, and was far too practical to think of having one. And now that he was in easy circumstances, a rising man, he considered women almost as incumbrances to the world, with whom a man had better have as little to do as possible. His first impression of Alice was indistinct, and he did not care enough about her to make it distinct. "A pretty yea-nay kind of woman," would have been his description of her, if he had been pushed into a corner. He was rather afraid, in the beginning, that her quiet ways arose from a listlessness and laziness of character which would have been exceedingly discordant to his active energetic nature. But, when he found out the punctuality with which his wishes were attended to, and her work was done; when he was called in the morning at the very stroke of the clock, his shaving-water scalding hot, his fire bright, his coffee made exactly as his peculiar fancy dictated, (for he was a man who had his theory about everything, based upon what he knew of science, and often perfectly original)—then he began to think: not that Alice had any peculiar merit; but that he had got into remarkably good lodgings: his restlessness wore away, and he began to consider himself as almost settled for life in them.

Mr. Openshaw had been too busy, all his life, to be introspective. He did not know that he had any tenderness in his nature; and if he had become conscious of its abstract existence, he would have considered it as a manifestation of disease in some part of his nature. But he was decoyed into pity unawares; and pity led on to tenderness. That little helpless child—always carried about by one of the three busy women of the house, or else patiently threading coloured beads in the chair from which, by no effort of its own, could it ever move; the great grave blue eyes, full of serious, not uncheerful, expression, giving to the small delicate face a look beyond its years; the soft plaintive voice dropping out but few words, so unlike the continual prattle of a child—caught Mr. Openshaw's attention in spite of himself. One day—he half scorned himself for doing so—he cut short his dinner-hour to go in search of some toy which should take the place of those eternal beads. I forget what he bought; but, when he gave the present (which he took care to do in a short abrupt manner, and when no one was by to see him) he was almost thrilled by the flash of delight that

came over that child's face, and could not help all through that afternoon going over and over again the picture left on his memory, by the bright effect of unexpected joy on the little girl's face. When he returned home, he found his slippers placed by his sitting-room fire; and even more careful attention paid to his fancies than was habitual in those model lodgings. When Alice had taken the last of his tea-things away—she had been silent as usual till then—she stood for an instant with the door in her hand. Mr. Openshaw looked as if he were deep in his book, though in fact he did not see a line; but was heartily wishing the woman would be gone, and not make any palaver of gratitude. But she only said:

"I am very much obliged to you, Sir. Thank you very much," and was gone, even before he could send her away with a "There, my good woman, that's enough!"

For some time longer he took no apparent notice of the child. He even hardened his heart into disregarding her sudden flush of colour and little timid smile of recognition, when he saw her by chance. But, after all, this could not last for ever; and, having a second time given way to tenderness, there was no relapse. The insidious enemy having thus entered his heart, in the guise of compassion to the child, soon assumed the more dangerous form of interest in the mother. He was aware of this change of feeling, despised himself for it, struggled with it; nay, internally yielded to it and cherished it, long before he suffered the slightest expression of it, by word, action, or look, to escape him. He watched Alice's docile obedient ways to her stepmother; the love which she had inspired in the rough Norah (roughened by the wear and tear of sorrow and years); but above all, he saw the wild, deep, passionate affection existing between her and her child. They spoke little to any one else, or when any one else was by; but, when alone together, they talked, and murmured, and cooed, and chattered so continually, that Mr. Openshaw first wondered what they could find to say to each other, and next became irritated because they were always so grave and silent with him. All this time, he was perpetually devising small new pleasures for the child. His thoughts ran, in a pertinacious way, upon the desolate life before her; and often he came back from his day's work loaded with the very thing Alice had been longing for, but had not been able to procure. One time it was a little chair for drawing the little sufferer along the streets, and many an evening that ensuing summer Mr. Openshaw drew her along himself, regardless of the remarks of his acquaintances. One day in autumn he put down his newspaper, as Alice came in with the breakfast, and said, in as indifferent a voice as he could assume:—

"Mrs. Frank, is there any reason why we two should not put up our horses together?"

Alice stood still in perplexed wonder. What did he mean? He had resumed the reading of his newspaper, as if he did not expect any answer; so she found silence her safest course, and went on quietly arranging his breakfast without another word passing between them. Just as he was leaving the house, to go to the warehouse as usual, he turned back and put his head into the bright, neat, tidy kitchen, where all the women breakfasted in the morning:

"You'll think of what I said, Mrs. Frank" (this was her name with the lodgers), "and let me have your opinion upon it to-night."

Alice was thankful that her mother and Norah were too busy talking together to attend much to this speech. She determined not to think about it at all through the day; and, of course, the effort not to think, made her think all the more. At night she sent up Norah with his tea. But Mr. Openshaw almost knocked Norah down as she was going out at the door, by pushing past her and calling out "Mrs. Frank!" in an impatient voice, at the top of the stairs.

Alice went up, rather than seem to have affixed too much meaning to his words.

"Well, Mrs. Frank," he said, "what answer? Don't make it too long; for I have lots of office work to get through to-night."

"I hardly know what you meant, Sir," said truthful Alice.

"Well! I should have thought you might have guessed. You're not new at this sort of work, and I am. However, I'll make it plain this time. Will you have me to be thy wedded husband, and serve me, and love me, and honour me, and all that sort of thing? Because, if you will, I will do as much by you, and be a father to your child—and that's more than is put in the prayer-book. Now, I'm a man of my word; and what I say, I feel; and what I promise, I'll do. Now, for your answer!"

Alice was silent. He began to make the tea, as if her reply was a matter of perfect indifference to him; but, as soon as that was done, he became impatient.

"Well?" said he.

"How long, sir, may I have to think over it?"

"Three minutes!" (looking at his watch). "You've had two already—that makes five. Be a sensible woman, say Yes, and sit down to tea with me, and we'll talk it over together; for, after tea, I shall be busy; say No" (he hesitated a moment to try and keep his voice in the same tone), "and I shan't say another word about it, but pay up a year's rent for my rooms to-morrow, and be off. Time's up! Yes or no?"

"If you please, sir,—you have been so good to little Ailsie—"

"There sit down comfortably by me on the

sofa, and let us have our tea together. I am glad to find you are as good and sensible as I took you for."

And this was Alice Wilson's second wooing.

Mr. Openshaw's will was too strong, and his circumstances too good, for him not to carry all before him. He settled Mrs. Wilson in a comfortable house of her own, and made her quite independent of lodgers. The little that Alice said with regard to future plans was in Norah's behalf.

"No," said Mr. Openshaw. "Norah shall take care of the old lady as long as she lives; and, after that, she shall either come, and live with us, or, if she likes it better, she shall have a provision for life—for your sake, missus. No one who has been good to you or the child shall go unrewarded. But even the little one will be better for some fresh stuff about her. Get her a bright, sensible girl as a nurse: one who won't go rubbing her with calf's-foot jelly as Norah does; wasting good stuff outside that ought to go in, but will follow doctors' directions; which, as you must see pretty clearly by this time, Norah won't; because they give the poor little wench pain. Now, I'm not above being nesh for other folks myself. I can stand a good blow, and never change colour; but, set me in the operating-room in the infirmary, and I turn as sick as a girl. Yet, if need were, I would hold the little wench on my knees while she screeched with pain, if it were to do her poor back good. Nay, nay, wench! keep your white looks for the time when it comes—I don't say it ever will. But this I know, Norah will spare the child and cheat the doctor if she can. Now, I say, give the bairn a year or two's chance; and then, when the pack of doctors have done their best—and, maybe, the old lady has gone—we'll have Norah back, or do better for her."

The pack of doctors could do no good to little Ailsie. She was beyond their power. But her father (for so he insisted on being called, and also on Alice's no longer retaining the appellation of Mama, but becoming henceforward Mother), by his healthy cheerfulness of manner, his clear decision of purpose, his odd turns and quirks of humour, added to his real strong love for the helpless little girl, infused a new element of brightness and confidence into her life; and, though her back remained the same, her general health was strengthened, and Alice—never going beyond a smile herself—had the pleasure of seeing her child taught to laugh.

As for Alice's own life, it was happier than it had ever been. Mr. Openshaw required no demonstration, no expressions of affection from her. Indeed, these would rather have disgusted him. Alice could love deeply, but could not talk about it. The perpetual requirement of loving words, looks, and caresses, and misconstruing their absence into absence of love, had been the

great trial of her former married life. Now all went on clear and straight, under the guidance of her husband's strong sense, warm heart, and powerful will. Year by year their worldly prosperity increased. At Mrs. Wilson's death, Norah came back to them as nurse to the newly-born little Edwin into which post she was not installed without a pretty strong oration on the part of the proud and happy father; who declared that if he found out that Norah ever tried to screen the boy by a falsehood, or to make him nesh either in body or mind she should go that very day. Norah and Mr. Openshaw were not on the most thoroughly cordial terms; neither of them fully recognising or appreciating the other's best qualities.

This was the previous history of the Lancashire family who had now removed to London, and had come to occupy the House.

They had been there about a year, when Mr. Openshaw suddenly informed his wife that he had determined to heal long-standing feuds and had asked his uncle and aunt Chadwick to come and pay them a visit and see London. Mrs. Openshaw had never seen this uncle and aunt of her husband's. Years before she had married him, there had been a quarrel. All she knew was, that Mr. Chadwick was a small manufacturer in a country town in South Lancashire. She was extremely pleased that the breach was to be healed and began making preparations to render their visit pleasant.

They arrived at last. Going to see London was such an event to them, that Mrs. Chadwick had made all new linen fresh for the occasion—from night-caps downwards; and as for gowns, ribbons, and collars, she might have been going into the wilds of Canada where never a shop is, so large was her stock. A fortnight before the day of her departure for London, she had formally called to take leave of all her acquaintance, saying she should need all the intermediate time for packing up. It was like a second wedding in her imagination; and, to complete the resemblance which an entirely new wardrobe made between the two events, her husband brought her back from Manchester, on the last market-day before they set off, a gorgeous pearl and amethyst brooch, saying "Lunnon should see that Lancashire folks knew a handsome thing when they saw it."

For some time after Mr. and Mrs. Chadwick arrived at the Openshaws', there was no opportunity for wearing this brooch; but at length they obtained an order to see Buckingham Palace, and the spirit of loyalty demanded that Mrs. Chadwick should wear her best clothes in visiting the abode of her sovereign. On her return, she hastily changed her dress; for Mr. Openshaw had planned that they should go to Richmond, drink tea and return by moonlight. Accordingly, about

five o'clock, Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw and Mr. and Mrs. Chadwick set off.

The housemaid and cook sat below, Norah hardly knew where. She was always engrossed in the nursery, in tending her two children, and in sitting by the restless, excitable Ailsie till she fell asleep. Bye-and-bye, the housemaid Bessy tapped gently at the door. Norah went to her, and they spoke in whispers.

"Nurse! there's some one down-stairs wants you."

"Wants me! Who is it!"

"A gentleman—"

"A gentleman? Nonsense!"

"Well! a man, then, and he asks for you, and he rung at the front door bell, and has walked into the dining-room."

"You should never have let him," exclaimed Norah, "master and missus out—"

"I did not want him to come in; but, when he heard you lived here, he walked past me, and sat down on the first chair, and said, 'Tell her to come and speak to me.' There is no gas lighted in the room, and supper is all set out."

"He'll be off with the spoons!" exclaimed Norah, putting the housemaid's fear into words, and preparing to leave the room, first, however, giving a look to Ailsie, sleeping soundly and calmly.

Down-stairs she went, uneasy fears stirring in her bosom. Before she entered the dining-room she provided herself with a candle, and, with it in her hand, she went in, looking round her in the darkness for her visitor.

He was standing up, holding by the table. Norah and he looked at each other; gradual recognition coming into their eyes.

"Norah?" at length he asked.

"Who are you?" asked Norah, with the sharp tones of alarm and incredulity. "I don't know you:" trying, by futile words of disbelief, to do away with the terrible fact before her.

"Am I so changed?" he said, pathetically. "I daresay I am. But, Norah, tell me!" he breathed hard, "where is my wife? Is she—is she alive?"

He came nearer to Norah, and would have taken her hand; but she backed away from him; looking at him all the time with staring eyes, as if he were some horrible object. Yet he was a handsome, bronzed, good-looking fellow, with beard and moustache, giving him a foreign looking aspect; but his eyes! there was no mistaking those eager, beautiful eyes—the very same that Norah had watched not half-an-hour ago, till sleep stole softly over them.

"Tell me, Norah—I can bear it—I have feared it so often. Is she dead?" Norah still kept silence. "She is dead!" He hung on Norah's words and looks, as if for confirmation or contradiction.

"What shall I do?" groaned Norah. "O, sir! why did you come? how did you find

me out? where have you been? We thought you dead, we did, indeed!" She poured out words and questions to gain time, as if time would help her.

"Norah! answer me this question straight, by yes or no—is my wife dead?"

"No, she is not!" said Norah, slowly and heavily.

"O, what a relief! Did she receive my letters? But perhaps you don't know. Why did you leave her? Where is she? O, Norah, tell me all quickly!"

"Mr. Frank!" said Norah at last, almost driven to bay by her terror lest her mistress should return at any moment, and find him there—unable to consider what was best to be done or said—rushing at something decisive, because she could not endure her present state: "Mr. Frank! we never heard a line from you, and the shipowners said you had gone down, you and every one else. We thought you were dead, if ever man was, and poor Miss Alice and her little sick, helpless child! 'O, sir, you must guess it,' cried the poor creature at last, bursting out into a passionate fit of crying, for indeed I cannot tell it. But it was no one's fault. God help us all this night!"

Norah had sat down. She trembled too much to stand. He took her hands in his. He squeezed them hard, as if by physical pressure, the truth could be wrung out.

"Norah!" His time his tone was calm, stagnant as despair. "She has married again!"

Norah shook her head sadly. The grasp slowly relaxed. The man had fainted.

There was brandy in the room. Norah forced some drops into Mr. Frank's mouth, chafed his hands, and—when mere animal life returned, before the mind poured in its flood of memories and thoughts—she lifted him up, and rested his head against her knees. Then she put a few crumbs of bread taken from the supper-table, soaked in brandy into his mouth. Suddenly he sprang to his feet.

"Where is she? Tell me this instant." He looked so wild, so mad, so desperate, that Norah felt herself to be in bodily danger; but her time of dread had gone by. She had been afraid to tell him the truth, and then she had been a coward. Now, her wits were sharpened by the sense of his desperate state. He must leave the house. She would pity him afterwards; but now she must rather command and upbraid; for he must leave the house before her mistress came home. That one necessity stood clear before her.

"She is not here: that is enough for you to know. Nor can I say exactly where she is" (which was true to the letter if not to the spirit). "Go away, and tell me where to find you to-morrow, and I will tell you all. My master and mistress may come back at any minute, and then what would become of me with a strange man in the house?"

Such an argument was too petty to touch his excited mind.

"I don't care for your master and mistress. If your master is a man, he must feel for me—poor shipwrecked sailor that I am—kept for years a prisoner amongst savages, always, always, always thinking of my wife and my home—dreaming of her by night, talking to her, though she could not hear, by day. I loved her more than all heaven and earth put together. Tell me where she is, this instant, you wretched woman, who saved over her wickedness to her, as you do to me."

The clock struck ten. Desperate positions require desperate measures.

"If you will leave the house now, I will come to you to-morrow and tell you all. What is more, you shall see your child now. She lies sleeping up-stairs. O, sir, you have a child, you do not know that as yet—a little weakly girl—with just a heart and soul beyond her years. We have reared her up with such care. We watched her, for we thought for many a year she might die any day, and we tended her, and no hard thing has come near her, and no rough word has ever been said to her. And now you come and will take her life into your hand, and will crush it. Strangers to her have been kind to her; but her own father—Mr. Frank, I am her nurse, and I love her, and I tend her, and I would do anything for her that I could. Her mother's heart beats as hers beats; and, if she suffers a pain, her mother trembles all over. If she is happy, it is her mother that smiles and is glad. If she is growing stronger, her mother is healthy; if she dwindles, her mother languishes. If she dies—well, I don't know: it is not every one can lie down and die when they wish it. Come up-stairs, Mr. Frank, and see your child. Seeing her will do good to your poor heart. Then go away, in God's name, just this one night—to-morrow, if need be, you can do anything—kill us all if you will, or show yourself a great grand man, whom God will bless for ever and ever. Come, Mr. Frank, the look of a sleeping child is sure to give peace."

She led him up-stairs; at first almost helping his steps, till they came near the nursery door. She had almost forgotten the existence of little Edwin. It struck upon her with affright as the shaded light fell upon the other cot; but she skilfully threw that corner of the room into darkness, and let the light fall on the sleeping Ailsie. The child had thrown down the coverings, and her deformity, as she lay with her back to them, was plainly visible through her slight night-gown. Her little face, deprived of the luster of her eyes, looked wan and pinched, and had a pathetic expression in it, even as she slept. The poor father looked and looked with hungry, wistful eyes, into which the big tears came swelling up slowly, and dropped heavily down, as he stood trembling and speaking all

over. Norah was angry with herself for growing impatient of the length of time that long lingering gaze lasted. She thought that she waited for full half-an-hour before Frank stirred. And then—instead of going away—he sank down on his knees by the bedside, and buried his face in the clothes. Little Ailsie stirred uneasily. Norah pulled him up in terror. She could afford no more time even for prayer in her extremity of fear; for surely the next moment would bring her mistress home. She took him forcibly by the arm; but, as he was going, his eye lighted on the other bed: he stopped. Intelligence came back into his face. His hands clenched.

"His child?" he asked.

"Her child," replied Norah. "God watches over him," said she instinctively; for Frank's looks excited her fears, and she needed to remind herself of the Protector of the helpless.

"God has not watched over me," he said, in despair; his thoughts apparently recoiling on his own desolate, deserted state. But Norah had no time for pity. To-morrow she would be as compassionate as her heart prompted. At length she guided him down-stairs and shut the outer door and bolted it—as if by bolts to keep out facts.

Then she went back into the dining-room and effaced all traces of his presence as far as she could. She went up-stairs to the nursery and sat there, her head on her hand, thinking what was to come of all this misery. It seemed to her very long before they did return; yet it was hardly eleven o'clock. She heard the loud, hearty Lancashire voices on the stairs; and, for the first time, she understood the contrast of the desolation of the poor man who had so lately gone forth in lonely despair.

It almost put her out of patience to see Mrs. Openshaw come in, calmly smiling, handsomely dressed, happy, easy, to inquire after her children.

"Did Ailsie go to sleep comfortably?" she whispered to Norah.

"Yes."

Her mother bent over her, looking at her slumbers with the soft eyes of love. How little she dreamed who had looked on her last! Then she went to Edwin, with perhaps less wistful anxiety in her countenance, but more of pride. She took off her things, to go down to supper. Norah saw her no more that night.

Beside the door into the passage, the sleeping-nursery opened out of Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw's room, in order that they might have the children more immediately under their own eyes. Early the next summer morning Mrs. Openshaw was awakened by Ailsie's startled call of "Mother! mother!" She sprang up, put on her dressing-gown, and went to her child. Ailsie was only half awake, and in a not uncommon state of terror.

"Who was he, mother? Tell me!"

"Who, my darling? No one is here. You have been dreaming love. Waken up quite. See, it is broad daylight."

"Yes," said Ailsie, looking round her; then clinging to her mother, said, "but a man was here in the night, mother."

"Nonsense, little goose. No man has ever come near you!"

"Yes, he did. He stood there. Just by Norah. A man with hair and a beard. And he knelt down and said his prayers. Norah knows he was here, mother" (half angrily, as Mrs. Openshaw shook her head in smiling incredulity).

"Well! we will ask Norah when she comes," said Mrs. Openshaw, soothingly. "But we won't talk any more about him now. It is not five o'clock; it is too early for you to get up. Shall I fetch you a book and read to you?"

"Don't leave me, mother," said the child, clinging to her. So Mrs. Openshaw sate on the bedside talking to Ailsie, and telling her of what they had done at Richmond the evening before, until the little girl's eyes slowly closed and she once more fell asleep.

"What was the matter?" asked Mr. Openshaw, as his wife returned to bed.

"Ailsie, wakened up in a fright, with some story of a man having been in the room to say his prayers,—a dream, I suppose." And no more was said at the time.

Mrs. Openshaw had almost forgotten the whole affair when she got up about seven o'clock. But, bye-and-bye, she heard a sharp altercation going on in the nursery. Norah speaking angrily to Ailsie, a most unusual thing. Both Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw listened in astonishment.

"Hold your tongue, Ailsie! let me hear none of your dreams; never let me hear you tell that story again!" Ailsie began to cry.

Mr. Openshaw opened the door of communication before his wife could say a word.

"Norah, come here!"

The nurse stood at the door, defiant. She perceived she had been heard, but she was desperate.

"Don't let me hear you speak in that manner to Ailsie again," he said sternly, and shut the door.

Norah was infinitely relieved; for she had dreaded some questioning; and a little blame for sharp speaking was what she could well bear, if cross examination was let alone.

Down-stairs they went, Mr. Openshaw carrying Ailsie; the sturdy Edwin coming step by step, right foot foremost, always holding his mother's hand. Each child was placed in a chair by the breakfast-table, and then Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw stood together at the window, awaiting their visitors' appearance and making plans for the day. There was a pause. Suddenly Mr. Openshaw turned to Ailsie, and said:

"What a little goosey somebody is with her dreams, waking up poor, tired mother in the middle of the night with a story of a man being in the room."

"Father! I'm sure I saw him," said Ailsie, half crying. "I don't want to make Norah angry; but I was not asleep, for all she says I was. I had been asleep,—and I awakened up quite wide awake though I was so frightened. I kept my eyes nearly shut, and I saw the man quite plain. A great brown man with a beard. He said his prayers. And then he looked at Edwin. And then Norah took him by the arm and led him away, after they had whispered a bit together."

"Now, my little woman must be reasonable," said Mr. Openshaw, who was always patient with Ailsie. "There was no man in the house last night at all. No man comes into the house as you know, if you think; much less goes up into the nursery. But sometimes we dream something has happened, and the dream is so like reality, that you are not the first person, little woman, who has stood out that the thing has really happened."

"But, indeed it was not a dream!" said Ailsie beginning to cry.

Just then Mr. and Mrs. Chadwick came down, looking grave and discomposed. All during breakfast time they were silent and uncomfortable. As soon as the breakfast things were taken away, and the children had been carried up-stairs, Mr. Chadwick began in an evidently preconcerted manner to inquire if his nephew was certain that all his servants were honest; for, that Mrs. Chadwick had that morning missed a very valuable brooch, which she had worn the day before. She remembered taking it off when she came home from Buckingham Palace. Mr. Openshaw's face contracted into hard lines: grew like what it was before he had known his wife and her child. He rang the bell even before his uncle had done speaking. It was answered by the housemaid.

"Mary, was any one here last night while we were away?"

"A man, sir, came to speak to Norah."

"To speak to Norah! Who was he? How long did he stay?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, sir. He came—perhaps about nine. I went up to tell Norah in the nursery, and she came down to speak to him. She let him out, sir. She will know who he was, and how long he stayed."

She waited a moment to be asked any more questions, but she was not, so she went away.

A minute afterwards Openshaw made as though he were going out of the room; but his wife laid her hand on his arm:

"Do not speak to her before the children," she said, in her low quiet, voice. "I will go up and question her."

"No! I must speak to her. You must know," said he, turning to his wife and aunt, "my missus has an old servant as

faithful as ever woman was, I do believe, as far as love goes,—but, at the same time, who does not always speak truth, as even the missus must allow. Now, my notion is, that this Norah of ours has been come over by some good-for-nothing chap (for she's at the time o'life when they say women pray for husbands—any, good Lord, any,) and has let him into our house, and the chap has made off with your brooch, and m'appen many another thing beside. It's only saying that Norah is soft-hearted, and does not stick at a white lie—that's all, missus."

It was curious to notice how his tone, his eyes, his whole face changed as he spoke to his wife; but he was the resolute man through all. She knew better than to oppose him; so she went up-stairs, and told Norah her master wanted to speak to her, and that she would take care of the children in the meanwhile.

Norah rose to go without a word. Her thoughts were these:

"If they tear me to pieces they shall never know through me. He may come,—and then just Lord have mercy upon us all: for some of us are dead folk to a certainty. But he shall do it; not me."

You may fancy, now, her look of determination as she faced her master alone in the dining-room; Mr. and Mrs. Chadwick having left the affair in their nephew's hands, seeing that he took it up with such vehemence.

"Norah! Who was that man that came to my house last night?"

"Man, sir!" As if infinitely surprised; but it was only to gain time.

"Yes; the man whom Mary let in; whom she went up-stairs to the nursery to tell you about; whom you came down to speak to; the same chap, I make no doubt, whom you took into the nursery to have your talk out with; whom Ailsie saw, and afterwards dreamed about; thinking, poor wench! she saw him say his prayers, when nothing, I'll be bound, was farther from his thoughts who took Mrs. Chadwick's brooch, val'ing ten pounds. Now, Norah! Don't go off! I am as sure as that my name's Thomas Openshaw, that you knew nothing of this robbery. But I do think you've been imposed on, and that's the truth. Some good-for-nothing chap has been making up to you, and you've been just like all other women, and have turned a soft place in your heart to him; and he came last night a-lov'ring, and you had him up in the nursery, and he made use of his opportunities, and made off with a few things on his way down! Come, now, Norah: it's no blame to you, only you must not be such a fool again! Tell us," he continued, "what name he gave you, Norah? I'll be bound it was not the right one; but it will be a clue for the police."

Norah drew herself up. "You may ask that question, and taunt me with my being angry, and with my credulity, as you will,

Master Openshaw. You'll get no answer from me. As for the brooch, and the story of theft and burglary; if any friend ever came to see me (which I defy you to prove, and deny), he'd be just as much above doing such a thing as you yourself, Mr. Openshaw and more so, too; for I'm not at all sure as everything you have is rightly come by, or would be yours long, if every man had his own." She meant, of course, his wife; but he understood her to refer to his property in goods and chattels.

"Now, my good woman," said he, "I'll just tell you truly, I never trusted you out and out; but my wife liked you, and I thought you had many a good point about you. If you once begin to sauce me, I'll have the police to you, and get out the truth in a court of justice, if you'll not tell it me quietly and civilly here. Now the best thing you can do is quietly to tell me who the fellow is. Look here! a man comes to my house; asks for you; you take him up-stairs, a valuable brooch is missing next day; we know that you, and Mary, and cook, are honest; but you refuse to tell us who the man is. Indeed you've told one lie already about him, saying no one was here last night. Now I just put it to you, what do you think a policeman would say to this, or a magistrate? A magistrate would soon make you tell the truth, my good woman."

"There's never the creature born that should get it out of me," said Norah. "Not unless I choose to tell."

"I've a great mind to see," said Mr. Openshaw, growing angry at the defiance. Then, checking himself, he thought before he spoke again:

"Norah, for your missus's sake I don't want to go to extremities. Be a sensible woman, if you can. It's no great disgrace, after all, to have been taken in. I ask you once more—as a friend—who was this man whom you let into my house last night?"

No answer. He repeated the question in an impatient tone. Still no answer. Norah's lips were set in determination not to speak.

"Then there is but one thing to be done. I shall send for a policeman."

"You will not," said Norah, starting forwards. "You shall not, sir! No policeman shall touch me. I know nothing of the brooch, but I know this: ever since I was four and twenty I have thought more of your wife than of myself: ever since I saw her, a poor motherless girl put upon in her uncle's house, I have thought more of serving her than of serving myself! I have cared for her and her child, as nobody ever cared for me. I don't cast blame on you, sir, but I say it's ill giving up one's life to any one; for, at the end, they will turn round upon you, and forsake you. Why does not my missus come herself to suspect me? Maybe she is gone for the police? But I don't stay here, either for police, or magistrate, or master."

"You're an unlucky lot. I believe there's a curse on you. I'll leave you this very day. Yes! I'll leave that poor Ailsie, too. I will! No good will ever come to you!"

Mr. Openshaw was utterly astonished at this speech; most of which was completely unintelligible to him, as may easily be supposed. Before he could make up his mind what to say, or what to do, Norah had left the room. I do not think he had ever really intended to send for the police to this old servant of his wife's; for he had never for a moment doubted her perfect honesty. But he had intended to compel her to tell him who the man was, and in this he was baffled. He was, consequently, much irritated. He returned to his uncle and aunt in a state of great annoyance and perplexity, and told them he could get nothing out of the woman; that some man had been in the house the night before; but that she refused to tell who he was. At this moment his wife came in, greatly agitated, and asked what had happened to Norah; for that she had put on her things in passionate haste, and had left the house.

"This looks suspicious," said Mr. Chadwick. "It is not the way in which an honest person would have acted."

Mr. Openshaw kept silence. He was sorely perplexed. But Mrs. Openshaw turned round on Mr. Chadwick with a sudden fierceness no one ever saw in her before.

"You don't know Norah, uncle! She is gone because she is deeply hurt at being suspected. O, I wish I had seen her—that I had spoken to her myself. She would have told me anything." Alice wrung her hands.

"I must confess," continued Mr. Chadwick to his nephew, in a lower voice, "I can't make you out. You used to be a word and a blow, and oftenest the blow first; and now, when there is every cause for suspicion, you just do nought. Your missus is a very good woman, I grant; but she may have been put upon as well as other folk, I suppose. If you don't send for the police, I shall."

"Very well," replied Mr. Openshaw, surlily. "I can't clear Norah. She won't clear herself, as I believe she might if she would. Only I wash my hands of it; for I am sure the woman herself is honest, and she's lived a long time with my wife, and I don't like her to come to shame."

"But she will then be forced to clear herself. That, at any rate, will be a good thing."

"Very well, very well! I am heart-sick of the whole business. Come, Alice, come up to the babies; they'll be in a sore way. I tell you, uncle!" he said, turning round once more to Mr. Chadwick, suddenly and sharply, after his eye had fallen on Alice's wan, tearful anxious face; "I'll have none sending for the police after all. I'll buy my aunt twice as handsome a brooch this very day; but I'll not have Norah suspected, and my missus plagued. There's for you."

He and his wife left the room. Mr. Chadwick quietly waited till he was out of hearing, and then said to his wife; "For all Tom's heroics, I'm just quietly going for a detective, wench. Thou need'st know nought about it."

He went to the police-station, and made a statement of the case. He was gratified by the impression which the evidence against Norah seemed to make. The men all agreed in his opinion, and steps were to be immediately taken to find out where she was. Most probably, as they suggested, she had gone at once to the man, who, to all appearance, was her lover. When Mr. Chadwick asked how they would find her out? they smiled, shook their heads, and spoke of mysterious but infallible ways and means. He returned to his nephew's house with a very comfortable opinion of his own sagacity. He was met by his wife with a penitent face:

"O master, I've found my brooch! It was just sticking by its pin in the flounce of my brown silk, that I wore yesterday. I took it off in a hurry, and it must have caught in it; and I hung up my gown in the closet. Just now, when I was going to fold it up, there was the brooch! I'm very vexed, but I never dreamt but what it was lost!"

Her husband muttering something very like "Confound thee and thy brooch too! I wish I'd never given it thee," snatched up his hat, and rushed back to the station; hoping to be in time to stop the police from searching for Norah. But a detective was already gone off on the errand.

Where was Norah? Half mad with the strain of the fearful secret, she had hardly slept through the night for thinking what must be done. Upon this terrible state of mind had come Ailsie's questions, showing that she had seen the Man, as the unconscious child called her father. Lastly came the suspicion of her honesty. She was little less than crazy as she ran up-stairs and dashed on her bonnet and shawl; leaving all else, even her purse, behind her. In that house she would not stay. That was all she knew or was clear about. She would not even see the children again, for fear it should weaken her. She feared above everything Mr. Frank's return to claim his wife. She could not tell what remedy there was for a sorrow so tremendous, for her to stay to witness. The desire of escaping from the coming event was a stronger motive for her departure than her soreness about the suspicions directed against her; although this last had been the final goad to the course she took. She walked away almost at headlong speed; sobbing as she went, as she had not dared to do during the past night for fear of exciting wonder in those who might hear her. Then she stopped. An idea came into her mind that she would leave London altogether, and betake herself to her native town.

of Liverpool. She felt in her pocket for her purse, as she drew near the Euston Square station with this intention. She had left it at home. Her poor head aching, her eyes swollen with crying, she had to stand still, and think, as well as she could, where next she should bend her steps. Suddenly the thought flashed into her mind that she would go and find out poor Mr. Frank. She had been hardly kind to him the night before, though her heart had bled for him ever since. She remembered his telling her, as she inquired for his address, almost as she had pushed him out of the door, of some hotel in a street not far distant from Euston Square. Thither she went: with what intention she hardly knew, but to assuage her conscience by telling him how much she pitied him. In her present state she felt herself unfit to counsel, or restrain, or assist, or do ought else but sympathise and weep. The people of the inn said such a person had been there; had arrived only the day before; had gone out soon after his arrival, leaving his luggage in their care; but had never come back. Norah asked for leave to sit down, and await the gentleman's return. The landlady—pretty secure in the deposit of luggage against any probable injury—showed her into a room, and quietly locked the door on the outside. Norah was utterly worn out, and fell asleep—a shivering, starting, uneasy slumber, which lasted for hours.

The detective, meanwhile, had come up with her some time before she entered the hotel, into which he followed her. Asking the landlady to detain her for an hour or so, without giving any reason beyond showing his authority (which made the landlady applaud herself a good deal for having locked her in), he went back to the police-station to report his proceedings. He could have taken her directly; but his object was, if possible, to trace out the man who was supposed to have committed the robbery. Then he heard of the discovery of the brooch; and consequently did not care to return.

Norah slept till even the summer evening began to close in. Then up. Some one was at the door. It would be Mr. Frank; and she dizzily pushed back her ruffled grey hair, which had fallen over her eyes, and stood looking to see him. Instead, there came in Mr. Openshaw and a policeman.

"This is Norah Kennedy," said Mr. Openshaw.

"O, sir," said Norah, "I did not touch the brooch; indeed I did not. O, sir, I cannot live to be thought so badly of;" and very sick and faint, she suddenly sank down on the ground. To her surprise, Mr. Openshaw raised her up very tenderly. Even the policeman helped to lay her on the sofa; and, at Mr. Openshaw's desire, he went for some wine and sandwiches; for the poor gaunt woman lay there almost as if dead with weariness and exhaustion.

"Norah!" said Mr. Openshaw, in his kindest voice, "the brooch is found. It was hanging to Mrs. Chadwick's gown. I beg your pardon. Most truly I beg your pardon, for having troubled you about it. My wife is almost broken-hearted. Eat, Norah,—or, stay, first drink this glass of wine," said he, lifting her head, pouring a little down her throat.

As she drank, she remembered where she was, and who she was waiting for. She suddenly pushed Mr. Openshaw away, saying, "O, sir, you must go. You must not stop a minute. If he comes back he will kill you."

"Alas, Norah! I do not know who 'he' is. But some one is gone away who will never come back: some one who knew you, and whom I am afraid you cared for."

"I don't understand you, sir," said Norah, her master's kind and sorrowful manner bewildering her yet more than his words. The policeman had left the room at Mr. Openshaw's desire, and they two were alone.

"You know what I mean, when I say some one is gone who will never come back. I mean that he is dead!"

"Who?" said Norah, trembling all over.

"A poor man has been found in the Thames this morning, drowned."

"Did he drown himself?" asked Norah, solemnly.

"God only knows," replied Mr. Openshaw, in the same tone. "Your name and address at our house, were found in his pocket: that, and his purse, were the only things, that were found upon him. I am sorry to say it, my poor Norah; but you are required to go and identify him."

"To what?" asked Norah.

"To say who it is. It is always done, in order that some reason may be discovered for the suicide—if suicide it was. I make no doubt he was the man who came to see you at our house last night. It is very sad, I know." He made pauses between each little clause, in order to try and bring back her senses; which he feared were wandering—so wild and sad was her look.

"Master Openshaw," said she, at last, "I've a dreadful secret to tell you—only you must never breathe it to any one, and you and I must hide it away for ever. I thought to have done it all by myself, but I see I cannot. You poor man—yes! the dead, drowned creature is, I fear, Mr. Frank, my mistress's first husband!"

Mr. Openshaw sat down, as if shot. He did not speak; but, after a while, he signed to Norah to go on.

"He came to me the other night—when—God be thanked—you were all away at Richmond. He asked me if his wife was dead or alive. He was a brute, and thought more of your all coming home than of his sore trial:

I spoke out sharp, and said she was married again, and very content and happy: I all but turned him away: and now he lies dead and cold!"

"God forgive me!" said Mr. Openshaw.

"God forgive us all!" said Norah. "You poor man needs forgiveness perhaps less than anyone among us. He had been among the savages—shipwrecked—I know not what—and he had written letters which had never reached my poor missus."

"He saw his child!"

"He saw her—yes! I took him up, to give his thoughts another start; for I believed he was going mad on my hands. I came to seek him here, as I more than half-promised. My mind misgave me when I heard he had never come in. O, sir! it must be him!"

Mr. Openshaw rang the bell. Norah was almost too much stunned to wonder at what he did. He asked for writing materials, wrote a letter, and then said to Norah:

"I am writing to Alice, to say I shall be unavoidably absent for a few days; that I have found you; that you are well, and send her your love, and will come home to-morrow. You must go with me to the Police Court; you must identify the body: I will pay high to keep names and details out of the papers."

"But where are you going, sir?"

He did not answer her directly. Then he said:

"Norah! I must go with you, and look on the face of the man whom I have so injured,—unwittingly, it is true; but it seems to me as if I had killed him. I will lay his head in the grave, as if he were my only brother: and how he must have hated me! I cannot go home to my wife till all that I can do for him is done. Then I go with a dreadful secret on my mind. I shall never speak of it again, after these days are over. I know you will not, either." He shook hands with her: and they never named the subject again, the one to the other.

Norah went home to Alice the next day. Not a word was said on the cause of her abrupt departure a day or two before. Alice had been charged by her husband in his letter not to allude to the supposed theft of the brooch; so she, implicitly, obedient to those whom she loved both by nature and habit, was entirely silent on the subject, only treated Norah with the most tender respect, as if to make up for unjust suspicion.

Nor did Alice inquire into the reason why Mr. Openshaw had been absent during his uncle and aunt's visit, after he had once said that it was unavoidable. He came back, grave and quiet; and, from that time forth, was curiously changed. More thoughtful, and perhaps less active; quite as decided in conduct, but with new and different rules for the guidance of that conduct. Towards Alice he could hardly be more kind than he

had always been; but he now seemed to look upon her as some one sacred and to be treated with reverence, as well as tenderness. He thrived in business, and made a large fortune, one half of which was settled upon her.

Long years after these events,—a few months after her mother died, Ailsie and her "father" (as she always called Mr. Openshaw), drove to a cemetery a little way out of town, and she was carried to a certain mound by her maid, who was then sent back to the carriage. There was a head-stone, with F. W. and a date. That was all. Sitting by the grave, Mr. Openshaw told her the story; and for the sad fate of that poor father whom she had never seen, he shed the only tears she ever saw fall from his eyes.

"A most interesting story, all through," I said, as Jarber folded up the first of his series of discoveries in triumph. "A story that goes straight to the heart—especially at the end. But"—I stopped, and looked at Trottle.

Trottle entered his protest directly in the shape of a cough.

"Well!" I said, beginning to lose my patience. "Don't you see that I want you to speak, and that I don't want you to cough?"

"Quite so, ma'am," said Trottle, in a state of respectful obstinacy which would have upset the temper of a saint. "Relative, I presume, to this story, ma'am?"

"Yes, yes!" said Jarber. "By all means let us hear what this good man has to say."

"Well, sir," answered Trottle, "I want to know why the House over the way doesn't let, and I don't exactly see how your story answers the question. That's all I have to say, sir."

I should have liked to contradict my opinionated servant, at that moment. But, excellent as the story was in itself, I felt that he had hit on the weak point, so far as Jarber's particular purpose in reading it was concerned.

"And that is what you have to say, is it?" repeated Jarber. "I enter this room announcing that I have a series of discoveries, and you jump instantly to the conclusion that the first of the series exhausts my resources. Have I your permission, dear lady, to enlighten this obtuse person, if possible, by reading Number Two?"

"My work is behindhand, ma'am," said Trottle, moving to the door, the moment I gave Jarber leave to go on.

"Stop where you are," I said, in my most peremptory manner, "and give Mr. Jarber his fair opportunity of answering your objection now you have made it."

Trottle sat down with the look of a martyr.

and Farber began to read with his back turned on the enemy more decidedly than ever.

GOING INTO SOCIETY.

At one period of its reverses, the House fell into the occupation of a Showman. He was found registered as its occupier, on the parish books of the time when he rented the House, and there was there no need of any clue to his name. But, he himself was less easy to be found; for, he had led a wandering life, and settled people had lost sight of him, and people who plumed themselves on being respectable were shy of admitting that they had ever known anything of him. At last, among the marsh lands near the river's level, that lie about Deptford and the neighbouring market-gardens, a Grizzled Personage in velveteen, with a face so cut up by varieties of weather that he looked as if he had been tattoo'd, was found smoking a pipe at the door of a wooden house on wheels. The wooden house was laid up in ordinary for the winter near the mouth of a muddy creek; and everything near it, the foggy river, the misty marshes, and the steaming market-gardens, smoked in company with the grizzled man. In the midst of this smoking party, the funnel-chimney of the wooden house on wheels was not remiss, but took its pipe with the rest in a companionable manner.

On being asked if it were he who had once rented the House to Let, Grizzled Velveteen looked surprised, and said yes. Then his name was Magsman? That was it, Toby Magsman—which lawfully christened Robert; but called in the line, from a infant, Toby. There was nothing agin Toby Magsman, he believed? If there was suspicion of such—mention it!

There was no suspicion of such, he might rest assured. But, some inquiries were making about that House, and would he object to say why he left it?

Not at all; why should he? He left it, along of a Dwarf.

Along of a Dwarf?

Mr. Magsman repeated, deliberately and emphatically, Along of a Dwarf.

Might it be compatible with Mr. Magsman's inclination and convenience, to enter, as a favour, into a few particulars?

Mr. Magsman entered into the following particulars.

It was a long time ago, to begin with;— afore lotteries and a deal more, was done away with. Mr. Magsman was looking about for a good pitch, and he see that house, and he says to himself, "I'll have you, if you're to be had. If money'll get you, I'll have you."

The neighbours cut up rough, and made complaints; but Mr. Magsman don't know what they would have had. It was a lovely thing. First of all, there was the canvass,

representin the picter of the Giant, in Spanish trunks and a ruff, who was himself half the height of the house, and was run up with a line and pulley to a pole on the roof, so that his Ed was coeval with the parapet. Then, there was the canvass, representin the picter of the Albina lady, showin her white air to the Army and Navy in correct uniform. Then, there was the canvass, representin the picter of the Wild Indian a scalpin a member of some foreign nation. Then, there was the canvass, representin the picter of a child of a British Planter, seized by two Boa Constrictors—not that we never had no child, nor no Constrictors neither. Similarly, there was the canvass, representin the picter of the Wild Ass of the Prairies—not that we never had no wild asses, for wouldn't have had 'em at a gift. Last, there was the canvass, representin the picter of the Dwarf, and like him too (considerin), with George the Fourth in such a state of astonishment at him as His Majesty couldn't with his utmost politeness and stoutness express. The front of the House was so covered with canvasses, that there wasn't a spark of daylight evel visible on that side. "MAGSMAN'S AMUSEMENTS," fifteen foot long by two foot high, ran over the front door and parlor winders. The passage was a Arbour of green baize and gardenstuff. A barrel-organ performed there unceasing. And as to respectability,—if threepence ain't respectable, what is?

But, the Dwarf is the principal article at present, and he was worth the money. He was wrote up as MAJOR TRSCHOFFKI, OF THE IMPERIAL BULGRADERIAN BRIGADE. Nobody couldn't pronounce the name, and it never was intended anybody should. The public always turned it, as a regular rule, into Chopski. In the line he was called Chops; partly, on that account, and partly because his real name, if he ever had any real name (which was very dubious), was Stakes.

He was a un-common small man, he really was. Certainly, not so small as he was made out to be, but where is your Dwarf as is? He was a most uncommon small man with a most uncommon large Ed; and what he had inside that Ed, nobody never knowed but himself: even supposin himself to have ever took stock of it, which it would have been a stiff job for even him to do.

The kindest little man as never growed! Spirited, but not proud. When he travelled with the Spotted Baby—though he knowed himself to be a nat'ral Dwarf, and knowed the Baby's spots to be put upon him artificial, he nursed that Baby like a mother. You never heerd him give a ill-name to a Giant. He *did* allow himself to break out into strong language respectin the Fat Lady from Norfolk; but that was an affair of the 'art; and when a man's 'art has been trifled with by a lady, and the preference giv to a Indian, he ain't master of his actions.

He was always in love, of course; every human nat'ral phenomenon is. And he was always in love with a large woman; I never knowed the Dwarf as could be got to love a small one. Which helps to keep 'em the Curiosities they are.

One sing'ler idea he had in that Ed of his, which must have meant something, or it wouldn't have been there. It was always his opinioin that he was entitled to property. He never would put his name to anything. He had been taught to write, by the young man without arms, who got his living with his toes (quite a writing-master he was, and taught scores in the line), but Chops would have starved to death, afore he'd have gained a bit of bread by putting his hand to a paper. This is the more curious to bear in mind, because he had no property, nor hope of property, except his house and a sarser. When I say his house, I mean the box, painted and got up outside like a reg'lar six-roomer, that he used to creep into, with a diamond ring (or quite as good to look at) on his forefinger, and ring a little bell out of what the Public believed to be the Drawing-room winder. And when I say a sarser, I mean a Chaney sarser in which he made a collection for himself at the end of every Entertainment. His cue for that, he took from me: "Ladies and gentlemen, the little man will now walk three times round the Cairawan, and retire behind the curtain." When he said anything important, in private life, he mostly wound it up with this form of words, and they was generally the last thing he said to me at night afore he went to bed.

He had what I consider a fine mind—a poetic mind. His ideas respectin his property, never come upon him so strong as when he sat upon a barrel-organ and had the handle turned. Arter the vibration had run through him a little time, he would screech out, "Toby, I feel my property coming—grind away! I'm counting my guineas by thousands, Toby—grind away! Toby, I shall be a man of fortun! I feel the Mint a jingling in me, Toby, and I'm swelling out into the Bank of England!" Such is the influence of music on a poetic mind. Not that he was partial to any other music but a barrel-organ; on the contrary, hated it.

He had a kind of a everlasting grudge agin the Public: which is a thing you may notice in many phenomenons that get their living out of it. What riled him most in the nater of his occupation was, that it kep him out of Society. He was continually sayin, "Toby, my ambition is, to go into Society. The curse of my position towards the Public, is, that it keeps me hout of Society. This don't signify to a low beast of a Indian; he an't formed for Society. This don't signify to a Spotted Baby; he an't formed for Society.—I am."

Nobody never could make out what Chops

done with his money. He had a good salary, down on the drum every Saturday as the day come round, besides having the run of his teeth—and he was a Woodpecker to eat—but all Dwarfs are. The sarser was a little income, bringing him in so many halfpence that he'd carry 'em, for a week together, tied up in a pocket handkercher. And yet he never had money. And it couldn't be the Fat Lady from Norfolk, as was once supposed; because it stands to reason that when you have a animosity towards a Indian which makes you grind your teeth at him to his face, and which can hardly hold you from Goosing him audible when he's going through his War-Dance—it stands to reason you wouldn't under them circumstances deprive yourself, to support that Indian in the lap of luxury.

Most unexpected, the mystery come out one day at Egham Races. The Public was shy of bein pulled in, and Chops was ringin his little bell out of his drawing-room winder, and was snarlin to me over his shoulder as he kneeled down with his legs out at the back-door—for he couldn't be shoved into his house without kneeling down, and the premises wouldn't accommodate his legs—was snarlin, "Here's a precious Public for you; why the Devil don't they tumble up?" when a man in the crowd holds up a carrier-pigeon, and cries out, "If there's any person here as has got a ticket, the Lottery's just drawed, and the number as has come up for the great prize is three, seven, forty-two! Three, seven, forty-two!" I was givin the man to the Furies myself, for calling off the Public's attention—for the Public will turn away, at any time, to look at anything in preference to the thing showed 'em; and if you doubt it, get 'em together for any individual purpose on the face of the earth, and send only two people inlate, and see if the whole company an't far more interested in takin particular notice of them two than of you—I say, I wasn't best pleased with the man for callin out, and, wasn't blessin him in my own mind, when I see Chops's little bell fly out of winder at a old lady, and he gets up and kicks his box over, exposin the whole secret, and he catches hold of the calves of my legs and he says to me, "Carry me into the wan, Toby, and throw a pail of water over me or I'm a dead man, for I've come into my property!"

Twelve thousand odd hundred pound, was Chops's winnins. He had bought a half-ticket for the twenty-five thousand prize, and it had come up. The first use he made of his property, was, to offer to fight the Wild Intlian for five hundred pound a side, him with a poisoned darwin-needle and the Indian with a club; but the Indian bein in want of backers to that amount, it went no further.

Arter he had been mad for a week—in a state of mind, in short, in which, if I had let him sit on the organ for only two minutes, I believe he would have hust—but we kep

the organ from him—Mr. Chops come round, and behaved liberal and beautiful to all. He then sent for a young man he knowed, as had a wery genteel appearance and was a Bonnet at a gaving-booth (most respectable brought up, fathar havin been imminent in the livery stable line but unfort'nate in a commercial crisis through paintin a old grey, ginger-bay, and sellin him with a Pedigree), and Mr. Chops said to this Bonnet, who said his name was Normandy, which it wasn't :

"Normandy, I'm a goin into Society. Will you go with me?"

Says Normandy: "Do I understand you, Mr. Chops, to hintimate that the 'ole of the expenses of that move will be borne by yourself?"

"Correct," says Mr. Chops. "And you shall have a Princely allowance too."

The Bonnet lifted Mr. Chops upon a chair, to shake hands with him, and replied in poetry, with his eyes seeminly full of tears :

"My boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea,
And I do not ask for more,
But I'll Go;—along with thee."

They went into Society, in a clay and four greys with silk jackets. They took lodgings in Pall Mall, London, and they blazed away.

In consequence of a note that was brought to Bartlemy Fair in the autumn of next year by a servant, most wonderful got up in milk-white cords and tops, I cleaned myself and went to Pall Mall, one evenin appointed. The gentlemen was at their wine arter dinner, and Mr. Chops's eyes was more fixed in that Ed of his than I thought good for him. There was three of 'em (in company, I mean), and I knowed the third well. When last met, he had on a white Roman shirt, and a bishop's-mitre covered with leopard-skin, and played the clarionet all wrong, in a band at a Wild Beast Show.

This gent took on not to know me, and Mr. Chops said: "Gentlemen, this is a old friend of former days:" and Normandy looked at me through a eye-glass, and said, "Magsman, glad to see you!"—which I'll take my oath he wasn't. Mr. Chops, to git him convenient to the table, had his chair on a throne (much of the form of George the Fourth's in the canvass), but he hardly appeared to me to be King there in any other pint of view, for his two gentlemen ordered about like Emperors. They was all dressed like May-Day—gorgeous!—and as to Wine, they swam in all sorta.

I made the round of the bottles, first separate (to say I had done it), and then mixed 'em all together (to say I had done it), and then tried two of 'em as half-and-half, and then t'other two. Altogether, I passed a pleasur evenin, but with a tendency to feel muddled, until I considered it good manners to get up and say, "Mr. Chops, the best of friends, must part, I thank you for the variety of foreign drains you have stood so

'ansome, I looks towards you in red wine, and I takes my leave." Mr. Chops replied, "If you'll just hitch me out of this over your right arm, Magsman, and carry me down-stairs, I'll see you out." I said I couldn't think of such a thing, but he would have it, so I lifted him off his throne. He smelt strong of Maideary, and I couldn't help thinking as I carried him down that it was like carrying a large bottle full of wine, with a rayther ugly stopper, a good deal out of proportion.

When I set him on the door-mat in the hall, he kep me close to him by holding on to my coat-collar, and he whispers :

"I an't 'appy, Magsman."

"What's on your mind, Mr. Chops?"

"They don't use me well. They an't grateful to me. They puts me on the mantel-piece when I won't have in more Champagne-wine, and they locks me in the sideboard when I won't give up my property."

"Get rid of 'em, Mr. Chops."

"I can't. We're in Society together, and what would Society say?"

"Come out of Society," says I.

"I can't. You don't know what you're talking about. When you have once gone into Society, you mustn't come out of it."

"Then if you'll excuse the freedom, Mr. Chops," were my remark, shaking my head grave, "I think it's a pity you ever went in."

Mr. Chops shook that deep Ed of his, to a surpris in extent, and slapped it half a dozen times with his hand, and with more Vice than I thought were in him. Then, he says, "You're a good feller, but you don't understand. Good night, go along. Magsman, the little man will now walk three times round the Cairawan, and retire behind the curtain." The last I see of him on that occasion was his tryin, on the extremest verge of insensibility, to climb up the stairs, one by one, with his hands and knees. They'd have been much too steep for him, if he had been sober; but he wouldn't be helped.

It warn't long after that, that I read in the newspaper of Mr. Chops's being presented at court. It was printed, "It will be recollected"—and I've noticed in my life, that it is sure to be printed that it *will* be recollected, whenever it won't—"that Mr. Chops is the individual of small stature, whose brilliant success in the last State Lottery attracted so much attention." Well, I says to myself, Such is life! He has been and done it in earnest at last! He has astonished George the Fourth!

(On 'account of which, I had that canvass new-painted, him with a bag of money in his hand, a presentin it to George the Fourth, and a lady in Ostrich Feathers fallin in love with him in a bag-wig, sword, and buckles correct.)

I took the House as is the subject of present inquiries—though not the honor of bein acquainted—and I run Magsman's Amuse-

ments in it thirteen months—sometimes one thing, sometimes another, sometimes nothing particular, but always all the canvasses outside. One night, when we had played the last company out, which was a shy company through its raining Heavens hard, I was takin a pipe in the one pair back along with the young man with the toes, which I had taken on for a month (though he never drew—except on paper), and I heard a kickin at the street door. "Halloa!" I says to the young man, "what's up!" He rubs his eyebrows with his toes, and he says, "I can't imagine, Mr. Magsman"—which he never could imagine nothin, and was monotonous company.

The noise not leavin off, I laid down my pipe, and I took up a candle, and I went down and opened the door. I looked out into the street; but nothin could I see, and nothin was I aware of, until I turned round quick, because some creetur run between my legs into the passage. There was Mr. Chops!

"Magsman," he says, "take me, on the hold terms, and you've got me; if it's done, say done!"

"I was all of a maze, but I said, 'Done, sir.'"

"Done to your done, and double done!" says he. "Have you got a bit of supper in the house?"

Bearin in mind them sparklin warieties of foreign drains as we'd guzzled away at in Pall Mall, I was ashamed to offer him cold sassaages and gin-and-water; but he took 'em both and took 'em free; havin a chair for his table, and sittin down at it on a stool, like hold times. I, all of a maze all the while.

It was arter he had made a clean sweep of the sassaages (beef, and to the best of my calculations two pound and a quarter), that the wisdom as was in that little man, began to come out of him like perspiration.

"Magsman," he says, "look upon me! You see afore you, One as has both gone into Society and come out."

"Oh! You are out of it, Mr. Chops? How did you get out, sir?"

"SOLD OUT!" says he. You never saw the like of the wisdom as his Ed expressed, when he made use of them two words.

"My friend Magsman, I'll impart to you a discovery I've made. It's wallable; it's cost twelve thousand five hundred pound; it may do you good in life.—The secret of this matter is, that it ain't so much that a person goes into Society, as that Society goes into a person."

Not exactly keeping up with his meanin, I shook my head, put on a deep look, and said, "You're right there, Mr. Chops."

"Magsman," he says, twitchin me by the leg, "Society has gone into me, to the tune of every penny of my property."

I felt that I went pale, and though nat'

rally a bold speaker, I couldn't hardly say, "Where's Normandy?"

"Bolted. With the plate," said Mr. Chops.

"And t'other one?"—meaning him as formerly wore the bishop's mitre.

"Bolted. With the jewels," said Mr. Chops.

I sat down and looked at him, and he stood up and looked at me.

"Magsman," he says, and he seemed to myself to get wiser as he got hoarser; "Society, taken in the lump, is all dwarfs. At the court of Saint James's, they was all a doin my hold business—all a goin three times round the Cairawan, in the hold Court suits and properties. Elsewhere, they was most of 'em ringin their little bells out of make-believes. Everywhere, the sarser was a goin round, Magsman, the sarser is the universal Institution!"

I perceived, you understand, that he was soured by his misfortunes, and I felt for Mr. Chops.

"As to Fat Ladies," says he, giving his Ed a tremendous one agin the wall, "there's lots of *them* in Society, and worse than the original. *Her's* was a outrage upon Taste—simply a outrage upon Taste—awakenin contempt—carryin its own punishment in the form of a Indian!" Here he giv himself another tremendous one. "But *theirs*, Magsman, *theirs* is mercenary outrages. Lay in Cashmeer shawls, buy bracelets, strew 'em and a lot of 'andsome fans and things about your rooms, let it be known that you give away like water to all as come to admire, and the Fat Ladies that don't exhibit for so much down upon the drum, will come from all the pints of the compass to flock about you, whatever you are. They'll drill holes in your 'art, Magsman, like a Cullender. And when you've no more left to give, they'll laugh at you to your face, and leave you to have your bones picked dry by Wultura, like the dead Wild Ass of the Prairies that you deserve to be!" Here he giv himself the most tremendous one of all, and dropped.

I thought he was gone. His Ed was as heavy, and he knocked it so hard, and he fell so stoney, and the sassaagerial disturbance in him must have been so immense, that I thought he was gone. But, he soon come round with care, and he sat up on the floor, and he said to me, with wisdom comin out of his eyes, if ever it come:

"Magsman! The most material difference between the two states of existence through which your unappy friend has passed;" he reached out his poor little hand, and his tears dropped down on the moustachio which it was a credit to him to have done his best to grow, but it is not in mortals to command success—"the difference is this. When I was out of Society, I was paid, light for being seen. When I went into Society, I paid heavy for being seen. I prefer the

former, even if I wasn't forced upon it. Give me out through the trumpet, in the hold way, tomorrow."

Arter that, he slid into the line again as easy as if he had been iled all over. But, the organ was kep from him, and no allusions was ever made, when a company was in, to his property. He got wiser every day; his views of Society and the Public was luminous, bewilderin, awful; and his Ed got bigger and bigger as his Wisdom expanded it.

He took well, and pulled 'em in most excellent for nine weeks. At the expiration of that period, when his Ed was a sight, he expressed one evenin, the last Company havin been turned out, and the door shut, a wish to have a little music.

"Mr. Chops," I said (I never dropped the "Mr." with him; the world might do it, but not me); "Mr. Chops, are you sure as you are in a state of mind and body to sit upon the organ?"

His answer was this: "Toby, when next met with on the tramp, I forgive her and the Indian. And I am."

It was with fear and trembling that I began to turn the handle; but he sat like a lamb. It will be my belief to my dying day, that I see his Ed expand as he sat; you may therefore judge how great his thoughts was. He sat out all the changes, and then he come off.

"Toby," he says, with a quiet smile, "the little man will now walk three times round the Cairawan, and retire behind the curtain."

When we called him in the morning, we found him gone into a much better Society than mine or Pall Mall's. I giv Mr. Chops as comfortable a funeral as lay in my power, followed myself as Chief, and had the George the Fourth canvass carried first, in the form of a banner. But, the House was so dismal arterwards, that I giv it up, and took to the Wan again.

"I don't triumph," said Jarber, folding up the second manuscript, and looking hard at Trottlet. "I don't triumph over this worthy creature. I merely ask him if he is satisfied now?"

"How can he be anything else?" I said, answering for Trottlet, who sat obstinately silent. "This time, Jarber, you have not only read us a delightfully amusing story, but you have also answered the question about the House. Of course it stands empty now. Who would think of taking it after it had been turned into a caravan?" I looked at Trottlet, as I said those last words, and Jarber waved his hand indulgently in the same direction.

"Let this excellent person speak," said Jarber. "You were about to say, my good man?"

"I only wished to ask, sir," said Trottlet, foggiedly, "if you could kindly oblige me with

a date or two, in connection with that last story?"

"A date!" repeated Jarber. "What does the man want with dates?"

"I should be glad to know, with great respect," persisted Trottlet, "if the person named Magsman was the last tenant who lived in the House. It's my opinion—if I may be excused for giving it—that he most decidedly was not."

With those words, Trottlet made a low bow, and quietly left the room.

There is no denying that Jarber, when we were left together, looked sadly discomposed. He had evidently forgotten to inquire about dates; and, in spite of his magnificent talk about his series of discoveries, it was quite as plain that the two stories he had just read, had really and truly exhausted his present stock. I thought myself bound, in common gratitude, to help him out of his embarrassment by a timely suggestion. So I proposed that he should come to tea again, on the next Monday evening, the thirteenth, and should make such inquiries in the meantime, as might enable him to dispose triumphantly of Trottlet's objection.

He gallantly kissed my hand, made a neat little speech of acknowledgment, and took his leave. For the rest of the week I would not encourage Trottlet by allowing him to refer to the House at all. I suspected he was making his own inquiries about dates, but I put no questions to him.

On Monday evening, the thirteenth, that dear unfortunate Jarber came, punctual to the appointed time. He looked so terribly harassed, that he was really quite a spectacle of feebleness and fatigue. I saw, at a glance, that the question of dates had gone against him, that Mr. Magsman had not been the last tenant of the House, and that the reason of its emptiness was still to seek.

"What I have gone through," said Jarber, "words are not eloquent enough to tell. Oh, Sophonisba, I have begun another series of discoveries! Accept the last two as stories laid on your shrine; and wait to blame me for leaving your curiosity unappeased, until you have heard Number Three."

Number Three looked like a very short manuscript, and I said as much. Jarber explained to me that we were to have some poetry this time. In the course of his investigations he had stepped into the Circulating Library, to seek for information on the one important subject. All the Library-people knew about the House was, that a female relative of the last tenant as they believed, had, just after that tenant left, sent a little manuscript poem to them which she described as referring to events that had actually passed in the House; and which she wanted the proprietor of the Library to publish. She had written no address on her letter; and the proprietor had kept the manuscript

ready to be given back to her (the publishing of poems not being in his line) when she might call for it. She had never called for it; and the poem had been lent to Jarber, at his express request, to read to me.

Before he began, I rang the bell for Trotter; being determined to have him present at the new reading, as a wholesome check on his obstinacy. To my surprise Peggy answered the bell, and told me that Trotter had stepped out, without saying where. I instantly felt the strongest possible conviction that he was at his old tricks: and that his stepping out in the evening, without leave, meant—Philandering.

Controlling myself on my visitor's account, I dismissed Peggy, stifled my indignation, and prepared, as politely as might be, to listen to Jarber.

THREE EVENINGS IN THE HOUSE.

NUMBER ONE.

I.

Yes, it look'd dark and dreary
That long and narrow street:
Only the sound of the rain,
And the tramp of passing feet,
The dusky glow of the fire,
And gathering mists of night
To mark how slow and weary
The long day's cheerless flight!

II.

Watching the sullen fire,
Hearing the dreary rain,
Drop after drop, run down
On the darkening window-pane:
Chill was the heart of Bertha,
Chill as that winter day,—
For the star of her life had risen
Only to fade away.

III.

The voice that had been so strong
To bid the snare depart,
The true and earnest will,
And the calm and steadfast heart,
Were now weigh'd down by sorrow,
Were quivering now with pain;
The clear path now seem'd clouded,
And all her grief in vain.

IV.

Duty, Right, Truth, who promised
To help and save their own,
Seem'd spreading wide their pinions
To leave her there alone.
So, turning from the Present
To well-known days of yore,
She call'd on them to strengthen
And guard her soul once more.

V.

She thought how in her girlhood
Her life was given away,
The solemn promise spoken
She kept so well to-day;
How to her brother Herbert
She had been help and guide,
And how his artist-nature
On her calm strength relied.

VI.

How through life's fret and turmoil
The passion and fire of art
In him was soothed and quicken'd
By her true sister heart;
How future hopes had always
Been for his sake alone;
And now, what strange new feeling
Possess'd her as its own?

VII.

Her home; each flower that breathed there;
The wind's sigh, soft and low;
Each trembling spray of ivy;
The river's murmuring flow;
The shadow of the forest;
Sunset, or twilight dim;
Dear as they were, were dearer
By leaving them for him.

VIII.

And each year as it found her
In the dull, feverish town,
Saw self still more forgotten,
And selfish care kept down
By the calm joy of evening
That brought him to her side,
To warn him with wise counsel,
Or praise with tender pride.

IX.

Her heart, her life, her future,
Her genius, only meant
Another thing to give him,
And be therewith content.
To-day, what words had stirr'd her,
Her soul could not forget?
What dream had fill'd her spirit
With strange and wild regret?

X.

To leave him for another:
Could it indeed be so?
Could it have cost such anguish
To bid this vision go?
Was this her faith? Was Herbert
The second in her heart?
Did it need all this struggle
To bid a dream depart?

XI.

And yet, within her spirit
A far-off land was seen;
A home, which might have held her;
A love, which might have been;
And Life: not the mere being
Of daily ebb and flow,
But Life itself had claim'd her,
And she had let it go!

XII.

Within her heart there echo'd
Again the well-known tone
That promised this bright future,
And ask'd her for its own:
Then words of sorrow, broken
By half-reproachful pain;
And then a farewell, spoken
In words of cold disdain.

XIII.

Where now was the stern purpose
That nerved her soul so long?
Whence came the words she utter'd,
So hard, so cold, so strong?

What right had she to banish
A hope that God had given?
Why must she choose earth's portion,
And turn aside from Heaven?

XIV.

To-day! Was it this morning?
If this long, fearful strife
Was but the work of hours,
What would be years of life?
Why did a cruel Heaven
For such great suffering call?
And why—O, still more cruel!—
Must her own words do all?

XV.

Did she repent? O Sorrow!
Why do we linger still
To take thy loving message,
And do thy gentle will?
See, her tears fall more slowly;
The passionate murmurs cease,
And hark upon her spirit
Flow strength, and love, and peace.

XVI.

The fire burns more brightly,
The rain has passed away,
Herbert will see no shadow
Upon his home to-day;
Only that Bertha greets him
With doubly tender care,
Kissing a fonder blessing
Down on his golden hair.

NUMBER TWO.

I.

THE studio is deserted,
Palette and brush laid by,
The sketch rests on the easel,
The paint is scarcely dry:
And Silence—who seems always
Within her depths to bear
The next sound that will utter—
Now holds a dumb despair.

II.

So Bertha feels it: listening
With breathless, stony fear,
Waiting the dreadful summons
Each minute brings more near:
When the young life, now ebbing,
Shall fail, and pass away
Into that mighty shadow
Who shrouds the house to-day.

III.

But why—when the sick chamber
Is on the upper floor—
Why dares not Bertha enter
Within the close-shut door?
If he—her all—her Brother,
Lies dying in that gloom,
What strange mysterious power
Has sent her from the room?

IV.

It is but one week's anguish
That can have changed her so;
Joy had not died here lately,
Struck down by one quick blow

But cruel months have needed
Their long relentless chain,
To teach that shrinking manner
Of helpless, hopeless pain.

V.

The struggle was scarce over
Last Christmas Eve had brought:
The fibres still were quivering
Of the one wounded thought,
When Herbert—who, unconscious,
Had guessed no inward strife—
Bade her, in pride and pleasure,
Welcome his fair young wife.

VI.

Bade her rejoice, and smiling,
Although his eyes were dim,
Thank'd God he thus could pay her
The care she gave to him.
This fresh bright life would bring her
A now and joyous fate—
O Bertha, check the murmur
That cries, Too late! too late!

VII.

Too late! Could she have known it
A few short weeks before,
That his life was completed,
And needing her no more,
She might—O sad repining?
What "might have been," forgot;
"It was not," should suffice us
To stifle vain regret.

VIII.

He needed her no longer,
Each day it grew more plain;
First with a startled wonder,
Then with a wondering pain.
Love: why, his wife best gave it;
Comfort: durst Bertha speak?
Counsel: when quick resentment
Flush'd on the young wife's cheek.

IX.

No more long talks by firelight
Of childish times long past,
And dreams of future greatness
Which he must reach at last;
Dreams, where her purer instinct
With truth unerring told
Where was the worthless gilding,
And where refined gold.

X.

Slowly, but surely ever,
Dora's poor jealous pride,
Which she call'd love for Herbert,
Drove Bertha from his side;
And, spite of nervous effort
To share their alter'd life,
She felt a check to Herbert,
A burden to his wife.

XI.

This was the least; for Bertha
Fear'd, dreaded, *knew* at length,
How much his nature owed her
Of truth, and power, and strength;
And watch'd the daily failing
Of all his nobler part:
Low aims, weak purpose, telling
"In lower, weaker art."

III.

And now, when he is dying,
The last words she could hear
Must not be hers, but given
The bride of one short year.
The last care is another's;
The last prayer must not be
The one they learnt together
Beside their mother's knee.

XIII.

Summon'd at last; she kisses
The clay-cold stiffening hand;
And, reading pleading efforts
To make her understand,
Answers, with solemn promise,
In clear but trembling tone,
To Dora's life henceforward
She will devote her own.

XIV.

Now all is over. Bertha
Dares not remain to weep,
But soothes the frightened Dora
Into a sobbing sleep.
The poor weak child will need her—
O, who can dare complain,
When God sends a new Duty
To comfort each new Pain!

NUMBER THREE.

I.

THE House is all deserted
In the dim evening gloom,
Only one figure passes
Slowly from room to room;
And, pausing at each doorway,
Seems gathering up again
Within her heart the relics
Of bygone joy and pain.

II.

There is an earnest longing
In those who onward gaze,
Looking with weary patience
Towards the coming days.
There is a deeper longing,
More sad, more strong, more keen:
Those know it who look backward,
And yearn for what has been.

III.

At every hearth she pauses,
Touches each well known chair;
Gazes from every window,
Lingers on every stair.
What have these months brought Bertha
Now one more year is past?
This Christmas Eve shall tell us,
The third one and the last.

IV.

The wilful, wayward Dora,
In these first weeks of grief,
Could seek and find in Bertha
Strength, soothing, and relief.
And Bertha—last sad comfort
True woman-heart can take—
Had something still to suffer
And do for Herbert's sake.

V.

Spring, with her western breezes,
From Indian islands bore
To Bertha news that Leonard
Would seek his home once more.
What was it—joy, or sorrow?
What were they—hopes, or fears?
That flush'd her cheeks with crimson,
And fill'd her eyes with tears?

VI.

He came. And who so kindly
Could ask and hear her tell
Herbert's last hours; for Leonard
Had known and loved him well.
Daily he came; and Bertha
Poor weary heart, at length,
Weigh'd down by other's weakness,
Could rest upon his strength.

VII.

Yet not the voice of Leonard
Could her true care beguile,
That turn'd to watch, rejoicing,
Dora's reviving smile.
So, from that little household
The worst gloom pass'd away,
The one bright hour of evening
Lit up the livelong day.

VIII.

Days passed. The golden summer
In sudden heat bore down
Its blue, bright, glowing sweetness
Upon the scorching town.
And sights and sounds of country
Came in the warm soft tune
Sung by the honey'd breezes
Borne on the wings of June.

IX.

In twilight hour, but earlier
Than usual, Bertha thought
She knew the fresh sweet fragrance
Of flowers that Leonard brought;
Through open'd doors and windows
It stole up through the gloom,
And with appealing sweetness
Drew Bertha from her room.

X.

Yes, he was there; and pausing
Just near the open'd door,
To check her heart's quick beating,
She heard—and paused still more—
His low voice—Dora's answers—
His pleading—Yes, she knew
The tone—the words—the accents:
She once had heard them too.

XI.

"Would Bertha blame her?" Leonard's
Low, tender answer came:
"Bertha was far too noble
To think or dream of blame."
"And was he sure he loved her?"
"Yes, with the one love given
Once in a lifetime only,
With one soul and one heaven!"

XII.

Then came a plaintive murmur,—
"Dora had once been told
That he and Bertha—"
Bertha is far too cold

To love; and I, my Dora,
If once I fancied so,
It was a brief delusion,
And over,—long ago."

XIII.

Between the Past and Present,
On that bleak moment's height,
She stood. As some lost traveller
By a quick flash of light
Seeing a gulf before him,
With dizzy, sick despair,
Reels to clutch backward, but to find
A deeper chasm there.

XIV.

The twilight grew still darker,
The fragrant flowers more sweet,
The stars shone out in heaven,
The lamps gleam'd down the street;
And hours pass'd in dreaming
Over their new found fate,
Ere they could think of wondering
Why Bertha was so late.

XV.

She came, and calmly listen'd;
In vain they strove to trace
If Herbert's memory shadow'd
In grief upon her face.
No blame, no wonder show'd there,
No feeling could be told;
Her voice was not less steady,
Her manner not more cold.

XVI.

They could not hear the anguish
That broke in words of pain
Through that calm summer midnight,—
"My Herbert—mine again!"
Yes, they have once been parted,
But this day shall restore
The long lost one: she claims him:
"My Herbert—mine once more!"

XVII.

Now Christmas Eve returning,
Saw Bertha stand beside
The altar, greeting Dora,
Again a smiling bride;
And now the gloomy evening
Sees Bertha pale and worn,
Leaving the house for ever,
To wander out forlorn.

XVIII.

Forlorn—nay, not so. Anguish
Shall do its work at length;
Her soul, pass'd through the fire,
Shall gain still purer strength.
Somewhere there waits for Bertha
An earnest noble part;
And, meanwhile, God is with her,—
God, and her own true heart!

I could warmly and sincerely praise the little poem, when Jarber had done reading it; but I could not say that it tended in any degree towards clearing up the mystery of the empty House.

Whether it was the absence of the irritating influence of Trottle, or whether it was simply fatigue, I cannot say, but Jarber did

not strike me, that evening, as being in his usual spirits. And though he declared that he was not in the least daunted by his want of success thus far, and that he was resolutely determined to make more discoveries, he spoke in a languid absent manner, and shortly afterwards took his leave at rather an early hour.

When Trottle came back, and when I indignantly taxed him with Philandering, he not only denied the imputation, but asserted that he had been employed on my service, and, in consideration of that, boldly asked for leave of absence for two days, and for a morning to himself afterwards, to complete the business, in which he solemnly declared that I was interested. In remembrance of his long and faithful service to me, I did violence to myself, and granted his request. And he, on his side, engaged to explain himself to my satisfaction, in a week's time, on Monday evening the twentieth.

A day or two before, I sent to Jarber's lodgings to ask him to drop in to tea. His landlady sent back an apology for him that made my hair stand on end. His feet were in hot water; his head was in a flannel petticoat; a green shade was over his eyes; the rheumatism was in his legs; and a mustard-poultice was on his chest. He was also a little feverish, and rather distracted in his mind about Manchester Marriages, a Dwarf, and Three Evenings, or Evening Parties—his landlady was not sure which—in an empty House, with the Water Rate unpaid.

Under these distressing circumstances, I was necessarily left alone with Trottle. His promised explanation began, like Jarber's discoveries, with the reading of a written paper. The only difference was that Trottle introduced his manuscript under the name of a Report.

TROTTLER'S REPORT.

THE curious events related in these pages would, many of them, most likely never have happened, if a person named Trottle had not presumed, contrary to his usual custom, to think for himself.

The subject on which the person in question had ventured, for the first time in his life, to form an opinion purely and entirely his own, was one which had already excited the interest of his respected mistress in a very extraordinary degree. Or, to put it in plainer terms still, the subject was no other than the mystery of the empty House.

Feeling no sort of objection to set a success of his own, if possible, aside by side, with a failure of Mr. Jarber's, Trottle made up his mind, one Monday evening, to try what he could do, on his own account, towards clearing up the mystery of the empty House. Carefully dismissing from his mind all nonsensical notions of former tenants and their histories, and keeping the

one point in view steadily before him, he started to reach it in the shortest way, by walking straight up to the House, and bringing himself face to face with the first person in it who opened the door to him.

It was getting towards dark, on Monday evening, the thirteenth of the month, when Trotter first set foot on the steps of the House. When he knocked at the door, he knew nothing of the matter which he was about to investigate, except that the landlord was an elderly widower of good fortune, and that his name was Forley. A small beginning enough for a man to start from, certainly!

On dropping the knocker, his first proceeding was to look down cautiously out of the corner of his right eye, for any results which might show themselves at the kitchen-window. There appeared at it immediately the figure of a woman, who looked up inquisitively at the stranger on the steps, left the window in a hurry, and came back to it with an open letter in her hand, which she held up to the fading light. After looking over the letter hastily for a moment or so, the woman disappeared once more.

Trotter next heard footsteps shuffling and scraping along the bare hall of the house. On a sudden they ceased, and the sound of two voices—a shrill persuading voice and a gruff resisting voice—confusedly reached his ears. After a while, the voices left off speaking—a chain was undone, a bolt drawn back—the door opened—and Trotter stood face to face with two persons, a woman in advance, and a man behind her, leaving back flat against the wall.

"Wish you good evening, sir," says the woman, in such a sudden way, and in such a cracked voice, that it was quite startling to hear her. "Chilly weather, ain't it, sir? Please to walk in. You come from good Mr. Forley, don't you, sir?"

"Don't you, sir?" chimes in the man hoarsely, making a sort of gruff echo of himself, and chuckling after it, as if he thought he had made a joke.

If Trotter had said, "No," the door would have been probably closed in his face. Therefore, he took circumstances as he found them, and boldly ran all the risk, whatever it might be, of saying, "Yes."

"Quite right, sir," says the woman. "Good Mr. Forley's letter told us his particular friend would be here to represent him, at dusk, on Monday the thirteenth—or, if not on Monday the thirteenth, then on Monday the twentieth, at the same time, without fail. And here you are on the Monday the thirteenth, ain't you, sir? Mr. Forley's particular friend, and dressed all in black—quite right, sir! Please to step into the dining-room—it's always kept scoured and clean against Mr. Forley comes here—and I'll fetch a candle in half a minute. It gets so dark in the evenings, now, you hardly know where you are, do you, sir? And how is good Mr.

Forley in his health? We trust he is better, Benjamin, don't we? We are so sorry not to see him as usual, Benjamin, ain't we? In half a minute, sir, if you don't mind waiting, I'll be back with the candle. Come along, Benjamin."

"Come along, Benjamin," chimes in the echo, and chuckles again as if he thought he had made another joke.

Left alone in the empty front-parlour, Trotter wondered what was coming next, as he heard the shuffling, scraping footsteps go slowly down the kitchen-stairs. The front-door had been carefully chained up and bolted behind him on his entrance; and there was not the least chance of his being able to open it to effect his escape, without betraying himself by making a noise.

Not being of the Jarber sort, luckily for himself, he took his situation quietly, as he found it, and turned his time, while alone, to account, by summing up in his own mind the few particulars which he had discovered thus far. He had found out, first, that Mr. Forley was in the habit of visiting the house regularly. Second, that Mr. Forley, being prevented by illness from seeing the people put in charge as usual, had appointed a friend to represent him; and had written to say so. Third, that the friend had a choice of two Mondays, at a particular time in the evening, for doing his errand; and that Trotter had accidentally hit on this time, and on the first of the Mondays, for beginning his own investigations. Fourth, that the similarity between Trotter's black dress, as servant out of livery, and the dress of the messenger (whoever he might be), had helped the error by which Trotter was profiting. So far, so good. But what was the messenger's errand? and what chance was there that he might not come up and knock at the door himself, from minute to minute, on that very evening?

While Trotter was turning over this last consideration in his mind, he heard the shuffling footsteps come up the stairs again, with a flash of candle-light going before them. He waited for the woman's coming in with some little anxiety; for the twilight had been too dim on his getting into the house to allow him to see either her face or the man's face at all clearly.

The woman came in first, with the man she called Benjamin at her heels, and set the candle on the mantel-piece. Trotter takes leave to describe her as an offensively-cheerful old woman, awfully lean and wiry, and sharp all over, at eyes, nose, and chin—devilishly brisk, smiling, and restless, with a dirty false front and a dirty black cap, and short fidgetty arms, and long hooked finger-nails—an unnaturally lusty old woman, who walked with a spring in her wicked old feet, and spoke with a smirk on her wicked old face—the sort of old woman (as Trotter thinks) who ought to have lived in the dark.

ages, and been ducked in a horse-pond, instead of flourishing in the nineteenth century, and taking charge of a Christian house.

"You'll please to excuse my son, Benjamin, won't you, sir?" says this witch without a broomstick, pointing to the man behind her, propped against the bare wall of the dining-room, exactly as he had been propped against the bare wall of the passage. "He's got his inside dreadful bad again, has my son Benjamin. And he won't go to bed, and he will follow me about the house, up-stairs and down-stairs, and in my lady's chamber, as the song says, you know. It's his indigestion, poor dear, that sours his temper and makes him so aggravating—and indigestion is a wearing thing to the best of us, ain't it, sir?"

"Ain't it, sir?" chimes in aggravating Benjamin, winking at the candle-light like an owl at the sunshine.

Trottle examined the man curiously, while his horrid old mother was speaking of him. He found "My son Benjamin" to be little and lean, and buttoned-up slovenly in a frowy old great-coat that fell down to his ragged carpet-slippers. His eyes were very watery, his cheeks very pale, and his lips very red. His breathing was so uncommonly loud, that it sounded almost like a snore. His head rolled helplessly in the monstrous big collar of his great-coat; and his limp, lazy hands pattered about the wall on either side of him, as if they were groping for an imaginary bottle. In plain English, the complaint of "My son Benjamin" was drunkenness, of the stupid, pig-headed, sottish kind. Drawing this conclusion easily enough, after a moment's observation of the man, Trottle found himself, nevertheless, keeping his eyes fixed much longer than was necessary on the ugly drunken face rolling about in the monstrous big coat collar, and looking at it with a curiosity that he could hardly account for at first. Was there something familiar to him in the man's features? He turned away from them for an instant, and then turned back to him again. After that second look, the notion forced itself into his mind, that he had certainly seen a face somewhere, of which that sot's face appeared like a kind of slovenly copy. "Where?" thinks he to himself, "where did I last see the man whom this aggravating Benjamin, here, so very strongly reminds me of?"

It was no time, just then—with the cheerful old woman's eye searching him all over, and the cheerful old woman's tongue talking at him, nineteen to the dozen—for Trottle to be ransacking his memory for small matters that had got into wrong corners of it. He put by in his mind that very curious circumstance respecting Benjamin's face, to be taken up again when a fit opportunity offered itself; and kept his wits about him in prime order for present necessities.

"You wouldn't like to go down into the

kitchen, would you?" says the witch without the broomstick, as familiar as if she had been Trottle's mother, instead of Benjamin's. "There's a bit of fire in the grate, and the sink in the back kitchen don't smell to matter much to-day, and it's uncommon chilly up here when a person's flesh don't hardly cover a person's bones. But you don't look cold, sir, do you? And then, why, Lord bless my soul, our little bit of business is so very, very little, it's hardly worth while to go down-stairs about it, after all. Quite a game at business, ain't it, sir? Give-and-take—that's what I call it—give-and-take!"

With that, her wicked old eyes settled hungrily on the region round about Trottle's waistcoat-pocket, and she began to chuckle like her son, holding out one of her skinny hands, and tapping cheerfully in the palm with the knuckles of the other. Aggravating Benjamin, seeing what she was about, roused up a little, chuckled and tapped in imitation of her, got an idea of his own into his muddled head all of a sudden, and bolted it out charitably for the benefit of Trottle.

"I say!" says Benjamin, settling himself against the wall and nodding his head viciously at his cheerful old mother. "I say! Look out. She'll skin you!"

Assisted by these signs and warnings, Trottle found no difficulty in understanding that the business referred to was the giving and taking of money, and that he was expected to be the giver. It was at this stage of the proceedings that he first felt decidedly uncomfortable, and more than half inclined to wish he was on the street-side of the house-door again.

He was still cudgelling his brains for an excuse to save his pocket, when the silence was suddenly interrupted by a sound in the upper part of the house.

It was not at all loud—it was a quiet, still, scraping sound—so faint that it could hardly have reached the quickest ears, except in an empty house.

"Do you hear what, Benjamin?" says the old woman. "He's at it again, even in the dark, ain't he? 'Praps you'd like to see him, sir?" says she, turning on Trottle, and poking her grinning face close to him. "Only name it; only say if you'd like to see him before we do our little bit of business—and I'll show good Forley's friend upstairs, just as if he was good Mr. Forley himself. My eggs are all right, whatever Benjamin's may be. I get younger and younger, and stronger and stronger, and jollier and jollier, every day—that's what I do! Don't mind the stairs on my account, sir, if you'd like to see him."

"Him?" Trottle wondered whether "him" meant a man, or a boy, or a domestic animal of the male species. Whatever it meant, here was a chance of putting off that uncomfortable give-and-take-business, and, better still, a chance perhaps of finding out

one of the secrets of the mysterious House. Trotter's spirits began to rise again, and he said "Yes," directly, with the confidence of a man who knew all about it.

Benjamin's mother took the candle at once, and lighted Trotter briskly to the stairs; and Benjamin himself tried to follow as usual. But getting up several flights of stairs, even helped by the bannisters, was more, with its particular complaint, than he seemed to feel himself inclined to venture on. He sat down obstinately on the lowest step, with his head against the wall, and the tails of his big great coat spreading out magnificently on the stairs behind him and above him, like a dirty imitation of a court lady's train.

"Don't sit there, dear," says his affectionate mother, stopping to snuff the candle on the first landing.

"I shall sit here," says Benjamin, aggravating to the last, "till the milk comes in the morning."

The cheerful old woman went on nimbly up the stairs to the first-floor, and Trotter followed, with his eyes and ears wide open. He had seen nothing out of the common in the front parlour, or up the staircase, so far. The House was dirty and dreary and close-smelling—but there was nothing about it to excite the least curiosity, except the faint scraping sound, which was now beginning to get a little clearer—though still not at all loud—as Trotter followed his leader up the stairs to the second floor.

Nothing on the second-floor landing, but cobwebs above and bits of broken plaster below, cracked off from the ceiling. Benjamin's mother was not a bit out of breath, and looked all ready to go to the top of the monument if necessary. The faint scraping sound had got a little clearer still; but Trotter was no nearer to guessing what it might be, than when he first heard it in the parlour downstairs.

On the third, and last, floor, there were two doors; one, which was shut, leading into the front garret; and one, which was ajar, leading into the back garret. There was a loft in the ceiling above the landing; but the cobwebs all over it vouched sufficiently for its not having been opened for some little time. The scraping noise, plainer than ever here, sounded on the other side of the back garret door; and, to Trotter's great relief, that was precisely the door which the cheerful old woman now pushed open.

Trotter followed her in; and, for once in his life, at any rate, was struck dumb with amazement, at the sight which the inside of the room revealed to him.

The garret was absolutely empty of everything in the shape of furniture. It must have been used, at one time or other, by somebody engaged in a profession or a trade which required for the practice of it a great deal of light; for the one window in the room which looked out on a wide open space at the

back of the house, was three or four times as large, every way, as a garret-window usually is. Close under this window, kneeling on the bare boards with his face to the door, there appeared, of all the creatures in the world to see alone at such a place and at such a time, a mere mite of a child—a little, lonely, wizened, strangely-clad boy, who could not at the most, have been more than five years old. He had a greasy old blue shawl crossed over his breast, and rolled up, to keep the ends from the ground, into a great big lump on his back. A strip of something which looked like the remains of a woman's flannel petticoat, showed itself under the shawl, and, below that again, a pair of rusty black stockings, worlds too large for him, covered his legs and his shoeless feet. A pair of old clumsy muffedees, which had worked themselves up on his little frail red arms to the elbows, and a big cotton nightcap that had dropped down to his very eyebrows, finished off the strange dress which the poor little man seemed not half big enough to fill out, and not near strong enough to walk about in.

But there was something to see even more extraordinary than the clothes the child was swaddled up in, and that was the game which he was playing at, all by himself; and which, moreover, explained in the most unexpected manner the faint scraping noise that had found its way down-stairs, through the half-opened door, in the silence of the empty house.

It has been mentioned that the child was on his knees in the garret, when Trotter first saw him. He was not saying his prayers, and not crouching down in terror at being alone in the dark. He was, odd and unaccountable as it may appear, doing nothing more or less than playing at a charwoman's or housemaid's business of scouring the floor. Both his little hands had tight hold of a mangy old blacking-brush, with hardly any bristles left in it, which he was rubbing backwards and forwards on the boards, as gravely and steadily as if he had been at scouring-work for years, and had got a large family to keep by it. The coming-in of Trotter and the old woman did not startle or disturb him in the least. He just looked up for a minute at the candle, with a pair of very bright, sharp eyes, and then went on with his work again, as if nothing had happened. On one side of him was a battered pint saucepan without a handle, which was his make-believe pail; and on the other a morsel of slate-coloured cotton rag, which stood for his flannel to wipe up with. After scrubbing bravely for a minute or two, he took the bit of rag, and mopped up, and then squeezed make-believe water out into his make-believe pail, as grave as any judge that ever sat on a Bench. By the time he thought he had got the floor pretty dry, he raised himself upright on his knees, and blew

out a good long breath, and set his little red arms akimbo, and nodded at Trottle.

"There!" says the child, knitting his little downy eyebrows into a frown. "Drat the dirt! I've cleaned up. Where's my beer?"

Benjamin's mother chuckled till Trottle thought she would have choked herself.

"Lord ha' mercy on us!" says she, "just hear the imp. You would never think he was only five years old, would you, sir? Please to tell good Mr. Forley you saw him going on as nicely as ever, playing at being me scouring the parlour floor, and calling for my beer afterwards. That's his regular game, morning, noon, and night—he's never tired of it. Only look how snug we've been and dressed him. That's my chawl a keepin his precious little body warm, and Benjamin's nightcap a keepin his precious little head warm, and Benjamin's stockings, drawn over his trowsers, a keepin his precious little legs warm. He's snug and happy if ever a imp was yet. 'Where's my beer!'—say it again, little dear, say it again!"

If Trottle had seen the boy, with a light and a fire in the room, clothed like other children, and playing naturally with a top, or a box of soldiers, or a bouncing big India-rubber ball, he might have been as cheerful under the circumstances as Benjamin's mother herself. But seeing the child reduced (as he could not help suspecting) for want of proper toys and proper child's company, to take up with the mocking of an old woman at her scouring-work for something to stand in the place of a game, Trottle, though not a family man, nevertheless felt the sight before him to be, in its way, one of the saddest and the most pitiable that he had ever witnessed.

"Why, my man," says he, "you're the boldest little chap in all England. You don't seem a bit afraid of being up here all by yourself in the dark."

"The big winder," says the child, pointing up to it, "sees in the dark; and I see with the big winder." He stops a bit, and gets up on his legs, and looks hard at Benjamin's mother. "I'm a good 'un," says he, "ain't I? I save candle."

Trottle wondered what else the forlorn little creature had been brought up to do without, besides candlelight; and risked putting a question as to whether he ever got a run in the open air to cheer him up a bit. O, yes, he had a run now and then, out of doors (to say nothing of his runs about the house), the lively little cricket—a run according to good Mr. Forley's instructions, which were followed off carefully, as good Mrs. Forley's friend would be glad to hear, to the very letter.

As Trottlet could only have made one reply to this, namely, that good Mr. Forley's instructions were, in his opinion, the instructions of an infernal scamp; and as he felt that such an answer would naturally prove

the death-blow to all further discoveries on his part, he gulped down his feelings before they got too many for him, and held his tongue, and looked round towards the window again to see what the forlorn little boy was going to amuse himself with next.

The child had gathered up his blacking brush and bit of rag, and had put them into the old tin saucepan; and was now working his way, as well as his clothes would let him, with his make-believe pail hugged up in his arms, towards a door of communication which led from the back to the front garret.

"I say," says he, looking round sharply over his shoulder, "what are you two stopping here for? I'm going to bed now—and so I tell you!"

With that, he opened the door, and walked into the front room. Seeing Trottlet take a step or two to follow him, Benjamin's mother opened her wicked old eyes in a state of great astonishment.

"Mercy on us!" says she, "haven't you seen enough of him yet?"

"No," says Trottlet. "I should like to see him go to bed."

Benjamin's mother burst into such a fit of chuckling that the loose extinguisher in the candlestick clattered again with the shaking of her hand. To think of good Mr. Forley's friend taking ten times more trouble about the imp than good Mr. Forley himself! Such a joke as that, Benjamin's mother had not often met with in the course of her life, and she begged to be excused if she took the liberty of having a laugh at it.

Leaving her to laugh as much as she pleased, and coming to a pretty positive conclusion, after what he had just heard, that Mr. Forley's interest in the child was not of the fondest possible kind, Trottlet walked into the front room, and Benjamin's mother, enjoying herself immensely, followed with the candle.

There were two pieces of furniture in the front garret. One, an old stool of the sort that is used to stand a cask of beer on; and the other a great big rickety straddling old truckle bedstead. In the middle of this bedstead, surrounded by a dim brown waste of sacking, was a kind of little island of poor bedding—an old bolster, with nearly all the feathers out of it, doubled in three for a pillow; a mere shred of patchwork counterpane, and a blanket; and under that, and peeping out a little on either side beyond the loose clothes, two faded chair cushions of horsehair, laid along together for a sort of makeshift mattress. When Trottlet got into the room, the lonely little boy had scrambled up on the bedstead with the help of the beer-stool, and was kneeling on the outer rim of sacking with the shred of counterpane in his hands, just making ready to tuck it in for himself under the chair cushions.

"I'll tuck you up, my man," says Trottlet, "Jump into bed, and let me try."

"I mean to tuck myself up," says the poor forlorn child, "and I don't mean to jump. I mean to crawl, I do—and so I tell you!"

With that, he set to work, tucking in the clothes tight all down the sides of the cushions, but leaving them open at the foot. Then, getting up on his knees, and looking hard at Trotter, as much as to say, "What do you mean by offering to help such a handy little chap as me?" he began to untie the big shawl for himself, and did it, too, in less than half a minute. Then, doubling the shawl up loose over the foot of the bed, he says, "I say, look here," and ducks under the clothes, head first, worming his way up and up softly, under the blanket and counterpane, till Trotter saw the top of the large nightcap slowly peep out on the bolster. This over-sized head-gear of the child's had so shoved itself down in the course of his journey to the pillow, under the clothes, that when he got his face fairly out on the bolster, he was all nightcap down to his mouth. He soon freed himself, however, from this slight encumbrance by turning the ends of the cap up gravely to their old place over his eyebrows—looked at Trotter—said, "Snug, ain't it? Good-bye!"—popped his face under the clothes again—and left nothing to be seen of him but the empty peak of the big nightcap standing up sturdily on end in the middle of the bolster.

"What a young limb it is, ain't it?" says Benjamin's mother, giving Trotter a cheerful dig with her elbow. "Come on! you won't see no more of him to-night!"

"And so I tell you!" sings out a shrill, little voice under the bedclothes, chiming in with a playful finish to the old woman's last words.

If Trotter had not been, by this time, positively resolved to follow the wicked secret which accident had mixed him up with, through all its turnings and windings, right on to the end, he would have probably snatched the boy up then and there, and carried him off from his gurret prison, bedclothes and all. As it was, he put a strong check on himself, kept his eye on future possibilities, and allowed Benjamin's mother to lead him down-stairs again.

"Mind them top bannisters," says she, as Trotter laid his hand on them. "They are as rotten as medlars every one of 'em."

"When people come to see the premises," says Trotter, trying to feel his way a little farther into the mystery of the House, "you don't bring many of them up here, do you?"

"Bless your heart alive!" says she, "nobody ever comes now. The outside of the house is quite enough to warn them off. More's the pity, as I say. It used to keep me in spirits, staggering 'em all, one after another, with the frightful high rent—specially the women, drat 'em. What's the rent of this house?"—

"Hundred and twenty? why, there ain't a house in the street as lets for more than eighty?"—Likely enough, ma'am; other landlords may lower their rents if they please; but this here landlord sticks to his rights, and means to have as much for his house as his father had before him!—"But the neighbourhood's gone off since then!"—Hundred and twenty pound, ma'am.—"The landlord must be mad!"—Hundred and twenty pound, ma'am.—"Open the door you impertinent woman!" Lord! what a happiness it was to see 'em bounce out, with that awful rent a-ringing in their ears all down the street!"

She stopped on the second-floor landing to treat herself to another chuckle, while Trotter privately posted up in his memory what he had just heard. "Two points made out," he thought to himself: "the house is kept empty on purpose, and the way it's done is to ask a rent that nobody will pay."

"Ah, deary me!" says Benjamin's mother, changing the subject on a sudden, and twisting back with a horrid, greedy quickness to those awkward money-matters which she had broached down in the parlour. "What we've done, one way and another for Mr. Forley, it isn't in words to tell! That nice little bit of business of ours ought to be a bigger bit of business, considering the trouble we take, Benjamin and me, to make the imp up-stairs as happy as the day is long. If good Mr. Forley would only please to think a little more of what a deal he owes to Benjamin and me—"

"That's just it," says Trotter, catching her up short in desperation, and seeing his way, by the help of those last words of hers to slipping cleverly through her fingers. "What should you say, if I told you that Mr. Forley was nothing like so far from thinking about that little matter as you fancy? You would be disappointed, now, if I told you that I had come to-day without the money?"—(her lank old jaw fell, and her villainous old eyes glared, in a perfect state of panic, at that!)"—But what should you say, if I told you that Mr. Forley was only waiting for my report, to send me here next Monday, at dusk, with a bigger bit of business for us two to do together than ever you think for?—What should you say to that?"

The old wretch came so near to Trotter, before she answered, and jammed him up confidentially so close into the corner of the landing, that his throat, in a manner, rose at her.

"Can you count it off, do you think, on more than that?" says she, holding up her four skinny fingers and her long crooked thumb, all of a tremble, right before his face.

"What do you say to two hands, instead of one?" says he, pushing past her, and getting down-stairs as fast as he could.

What she said Trotter thinks it best not to

report, seeing that the old hypocrite, getting next door to light-headed at the golden prospect before her, took such liberties with un-earthly names and persons which ought never to have approached her lips, and rained down such an awful shower of blessings on Trottle's head, that his hair almost stood on end to hear her. He went on down-stairs as fast as his feet would carry him, till he was brought up all standing, as the sailors say, on the last flight, by aggravating Benjamin, lying right across the stair, and fallen off, as might have been expected, into a heavy drunken sleep.

The sight of him instantly reminded Trottle of the curious half likeness which he had already detected between the face of Benjamin and the face of another man, whom he had seen at a past time in very different circumstances. He determined, before leaving the House, to have one more look at the wretched muddled creature; and accordingly shook him up smartly, and propped him against the staircase wall, before his mother could interfere.

"Leave him to me; I'll freshen him up," says Trottle to the old woman, looking hard in Benjamin's face, while he spoke.

The fright and surprise of being suddenly woke up, seemed, for about a quarter of a minute, to sober the creature. When he first opened his eyes, there was a new look in them for a moment, which struck home to Trottle's memory as quick and as clear as a flash of light. The old maudlin sleepy expression came back again in another instant, and blurred out all further signs and tokens of the past. But Trottle had seen enough in the moment before it came; and he troubled Benjamin's face with no more inquiries.

"Next Monday, at dusk," says he, cutting short some more of the old woman's palaver about Benjamin's indisposition. "I've got no more time to spare, ma'am, to-night: please to let me out."

With a few last blessings, a few last dutiful messages to good Mr. Forley, and a few last friendly hints not to forget next Monday at dusk, Trottle contrived to struggle through the sickening business of leave-taking; to get the door opened; and to find himself, to his own indescribable relief, once more on the outer side of the House To Let.

LET AT LAST.

"THERE, ma'am!" said Trottle, folding up the manuscript from which he had been reading, and setting it down with a smart tap of triumph on the table. "May I venture to ask what you think of that plain statement, as a guess on my part (and not on Mr. Jarber's) at the riddle of the empty House?"

For a minute or two I was unable to say a word. When I recovered a little, my first question referred to the poor forlorn little boy.

"To-day's Monday the twentieth," I said.

"Surely you have not let a whole week go by without trying to find out something more?"

"Except at bed-time, and meals, ma'am," answered Trottle, "I have not let an hour go by. Please to understand that I have only come to an end of what I have written, and not to an end of what I have done. I wrote down those first particulars, ma'am, because they are of great importance, and also because I was determined to come forward with my written documents, seeing that Mr. Jarber chose to come forward, in the first instance, with his. I am now ready to go on with the second part of my story as shortly and plainly as possible, by word of mouth. The first thing I must clear up, if you please, is the matter of Mr. Forley's family affairs. I have heard you speak of them, ma'am, at various times; and I have understood that Mr. Forley had two children only by his deceased wife, both daughters. The eldest daughter married, to her father's entire satisfaction, one Mr. Bayne, a rich man, holding a high government situation in Canada. She is now living there with her husband, and her only child, a little girl of eight or nine years old. Right so far, I think, ma'am?"

"Quite right," I said.

"The second daughter," Trottle went on, "and Mr. Forley's favourite, set her father's wishes and the opinions of the world at flat defiance, by running away with a man of low origin—a mate of a merchant-vessel, named Kirkland. Mr. Forley not only never forgave that marriage, but vowed that he would visit the scandal of it heavily in the future on husband and wife. Both escaped his vengeance, whatever he meant it to be. The husband was drowned on his first voyage after his marriage, and the wife died in child-bed. Right again, I believe, ma'am?"

"Again quite right."

"Having got the family matter all right, we will now go back, ma'am, to me and my doings. Last Monday, I asked you for leave of absence for two days; I employed the time in clearing up the matter of Benjamin's face. Last Saturday I was out of the way when you wanted me. I played truant, ma'am, on that occasion, in company with a friend of mine, who is managing clerk in a lawyer's office; and we both spent the morning at Doctors' Commons, over the last will and testament of Mr. Forley's father. Leaving the will-business for a moment, please to follow me first, if you have no objection, into the ugly subject of Benjamin's face. About six or seven years ago (thanks to your kindness) I had a week's holiday with some friends of mine who live in the town of Pendlebury. One of those friends (the only one now left in the place) kept a chemist's shop, and in that shop I was made acquainted with one of the two doctors in the town, named Barsham. This Barsham was a first-rate surgeon, and might have got

to the top of his profession, if he had not been a first-rate blackguard. As it was, he both drank and gambled; nobody would have anything to do with him in Pendlebury; and, at the time when I was made known to him in the chemist's shop, the other doctor, Mr. Dix, who was not to be compared with him for surgical skill, but who was a respectable man, had got all the practice; and Barsham and his old mother were living together in such a condition of utter poverty, that it was a marvel to everybody how they kept out of the parish workhouse."

"Benjamin and Benjamin's mother!"

"Exactly, ma'am. Last Thursday morning (thanks to your kindness, again) I went to Pendlebury to my friend the chemist, to ask a few questions about Barsham and his mother. I was told that they had both left the town about five years since. When I inquired into the circumstances, some strange particulars came out in the course of the chemist's answer. You know I have no doubt, ma'am, that poor Mrs. Kirkland was confined while her husband was at sea, in lodgings at a village called Flatfield, and that she died and was buried there. But what you may not know is, that Flatfield is only three miles from Pendlebury; that the doctor who attended on Mrs. Kirkland was Barsham; that the nurse who took care of her was Barsham's mother; and that the person who called them both in, was Mr. Forley. Whether his daughter wrote to him, or whether he heard of it in some other way, I don't know; but he was with her (though he had sworn never to see her again when she married) a month or more before her confinement, and was backwards and forwards a good deal between Flatfield and Pendlebury. How he managed matters with the Barshams cannot at present be discovered; but it is a fact that he contrived to keep the drunken doctor sober, to everybody's amazement. It is a fact that Barsham went to the poor woman with all his wits about him. It is a fact that he and his mother came back from Flatfield after Mrs. Kirkland's death, packed up what few things they had, and left the town mysteriously by night. And, lastly, it is also a fact that the other doctor, Mr. Dix, was not called in to help, till a week after the birth and burial of the child, when the mother was sinking from exhaustion—exhaustion (to give the vagabond, Barsham, his due) not produced, in Mr. Dix's opinion, by improper medical treatment, but by the bodily weakness of the poor woman herself—"

"Burial of the child?" I interrupted, trembling all over. "Trottle! you spoke that word 'burial,' in a very strange way—you are fixing your eyes on me now with a very strange look—"

Trottle leaned over close to me, and pointed through the window to the empty house.

"The child's death is registered, at Pendle-

bury," he said, "on Barsham's certificate, under the head of Male Infant, Still-Born. The child's coffin lies in the mother's grave, in Flatfield churchyard. The child himself—as surely as I live and breathe, is living and breathing now—a castaway and a prisoner in that villainous house!"

I sank back in my chair.

"It's guess-work, so far, but it is borne in on my mind, for all that, as truth. Rouse yourself, ma'am, and think a little. The last I hear of Barsham, he is attending Mr. Forley's disobedient daughter. The next I see of Barsham, he is in Mr. Forley's house, trusted with a secret. He and his mother leave Pendlebury suddenly and suspiciously five years back; and he and his mother have got a child of five years old, hidden away in the house. Wait! please go wait—I have not done yet. The will left by Mr. Forley's father, strengthens the suspicion. The friend I took with me to Doctors' Commons, made himself master of the contents of that will; and when he had done so, I put these two questions to him. 'Can Mr. Forley leave his money at his own discretion to anybody he pleases?' 'No,' my friend says, 'his father has left him with only a life interest in it.' 'Suppose one of Mr. Forley's married daughters has a girl, and the other a boy, how would the money go?' 'It would all go,' my friend says, 'to the boy, and it would be charged with the payment of a certain annual income to his female cousin. After her death, it would go back to the male descendant, and to his heirs.' Consider that, ma'am! The child of the daughter whom Mr. Forley hates, whose husband has been snatched away from his vengeance by death, takes his whole property in defiance of him; and the child of the daughter whom he loves, is left a pensioner on her low-born boy-cousin for life! There was good—too good reason—why that child of Mrs. Kirkland's should be registered still-born. And if, as I believe, the register is founded on a false certificate, there is better, still better reason, why the existence of the child should be hidden, and all trace of his parentage blotted out, in the garret of that empty house."

He stopped, and pointed for the second time to the dim, dust-covered garret-windows opposite. As he did so, I was startled—a very slight matter sufficed to frighten me now—by a knock at the door of the room in which we were sitting.

My maid came in, with a letter in her hand. I took it from her. The mourning card, which was all the envelope enclosed, dropped from my hands.

George Forley was no more. He had departed this life three days since, on the evening of Friday.

"Did our last chance of discovering the truth," I asked, "rest with him? Has it died with his death?"

"Courage, ma'am! I think not. Our chance rests on our power to make Barsham and his mother confess; and Mr. Forley's death, by leaving them helpless, seems to put that power into our hands. With your permission, I will not wait till dusk to-day, as I at first intended, but will make sure of those two people at once. With a policeman in plain clothes to watch the house, in case they try to leave it; with this card to vouch for the fact of Mr. Forley's death; and with a bold acknowledgment on my part of having got possession of their secret, and of being ready to use it against them in case of need, I think there is little doubt of bringing Barsham and his mother to terms. In case I find it impossible to get back here before dusk, please to sit near the window, ma'am, and watch the house, a little before they light the street-lamps. If you see the front-door open and close again, will you be good enough to put on your bonnet, and come across to me immediately? Mr. Forley's death may, or may not, prevent his messenger from coming as arranged. But, if the person does come, it is of importance that you, as a relative of Mr. Forley's, should be present to see him, and to have that proper influence over him which I cannot pretend to exercise."

The only words I could say to Trottle as he opened the door and left me, were words charging him to take care that no harm happened to the poor forlorn little boy.

Left alone, I drew my chair to the window; and looked out with a beating heart at the guilty house. I waited and waited through what appeared to me to be an endless time, until I heard the wheels of a cab stop at the end of the street. I looked in that direction, and saw Trottle get out of the cab alone, walk up to the House, and knock at the door. He was let in by Barsham's mother. A minute or two later, a decently-dressed man sauntered past the house, looked up at it for a moment, and sauntered on to the corner of the street close by. Here he leant against the post, and lighted a cigar, and stopped there smoking in an idle way, but, keeping his face always turned in the direction of the house-door.

I waited and waited still. I waited and waited, with my eyes riveted to the door of the house. At last I thought I saw it open in the dusk, and then felt sure I heard it shut again softly. Though I tried hard to compose myself, I trembled so that I was obliged to call for Peggy to help me on with my bonnet and cloak, and was forced to take her arm to lean on, in crossing the street.

Trottle opened the door to us, before we could knock. Peggy went back, and I went in. He had a lighted candle in his hand.

"It has happened, ma'am, as I thought it would," he whispered, leading me into the bare, comfortless, empty parlour. "Barsham, and his mother have consulted their own

interests, and have come to terms. 'My guess-work is guess-work no longer. It is now what I felt it was—Truth!'"

Something strange to me—something which women who are mothers must often know—troubled suddenly in my heart, and brought the warm tears of my youthful days thronging back into my eyes. I took my faithful old servant by the hand, and asked him to let me see Mrs. Kirkland's child, for his mother's sake.

"If you desire it, ma'am," said Trottle, with a gentleness of manner that I had never noticed in him before. "But pray don't think me wanting in duty and right feeling, if I beg you to try and wait a little. You are agitated already, and a first meeting with the child will not help to make you so calm, as you would wish to be, if Mr. Forley's messenger comes. The little boy is safe upstairs. Pray think first of trying to compose yourself for a meeting with a stranger; and believe me you shall not leave the house afterwards without the child."

I felt that Trottle was right, and sat down as patiently as I could in a chair he had thoughtfully placed ready for me. I was so horrified at the discovery of my own relation's wickedness that when Trottle, proposed to make me acquainted with the confession wrung from Barsham and his mother, I begged him to spare me all details, and only to tell me what was necessary about George Forley.

"All that can be said for Mr. Forley, ma'am, is, that he was just scrupulous enough to hide the child's existence and blot out its parentage here, instead of consenting, at the first, to its death, or afterwards, when the boy grew up, to turning him adrift, absolutely helpless in the world. The fraud has been managed, ma'am, with the cunning of Satan himself. Mr. Forley had the hold over the Barshams, that they had helped him in his villany, and that they were dependent on him for the bread they eat. He brought them up to London to keep them securely under his own eye. He put them into this empty house (taking it out of the agent's hands previously, on pretence that he meant to manage the letting of it himself); and by keeping the house empty, made it the surest of all hiding places for the child. Here, Mr. Forley could come, whenever he pleased, to see that the poor lonely child was not absolutely starved; sure that his visits would only appear like looking after his own property. Here the child was to have been trained to believe himself Barsham's child, till he should be old enough to be provided for in some situation, as low and as poor as Mr. Forley's uneasy conscience would let him pick out. He may have thought of atonement on his death-bed; but not before—I am only too certain of it—not before!"

A low, double knock startled us.

"The messenger!" said Trottle, under his

breath. He went out instantly to answer the knock; and returned, leading in a respectable-looking elderly man, dressed like Trottle, all in black, with a white cravat, but otherwise not at all resembling him.

"I am afraid I have made some mistake," said the stranger.

Trottle, considerably taking the office of explanation into his own hands, assured the gentleman that there was no mistake; mentioned to him who I was; and asked him if he had not come on business connected with the late Mr. Forley. Looking greatly astonished, the gentleman answered, "Yes." There was an awkward moment of silence, after that. The stranger seemed to be not only startled and amazed, but rather distrustful and fearful of committing himself as well. Noticing this, I thought it best to request Trottle to put an end to further embarrassment, by stating all particulars truthfully, as he had stated them to me; and I begged the gentleman to listen patiently for the late Mr. Forley's sake. He bowed to me very respectfully, and said he was prepared to listen with the greatest interest.

It was evident to me—and, I could see, to Trottle also—that we were not dealing, to say the least, with a dishonest man.

"Before I offer any opinion on what I have heard," he said, earnestly and anxiously, after Trottle had done, "I must be allowed, in justice to myself, to explain my own apparent connection with this very strange and very shocking business. I was the confidential legal adviser of the late Mr. Forley, and I am left his executor. Rather more than a fortnight back, when Mr. Forley was confined to his room by illness, he sent for me, and charged me to call and pay a certain sum of money here, to a man and woman whom I should find taking charge of the house. He said he had reasons for wishing the affair to be kept a secret. He begged me so to arrange my engagements that I could call at this place either on Monday last, or to-day, at dusk; and he mentioned that he would write to warn the people of my coming, without mentioning my name (Dalcott is my name) as he did not wish to expose me to any future importunities on the part of the man and woman. I need hardly tell you that this commission struck me as being a strange one; but, in my position with Mr. Forley, I had no resource but to accept it without asking questions, or to break off my long and friendly connection with my client. I chose the first alternative. Business prevented me from doing my errand on Monday last—and if I am here to-day, notwithstanding Mr. Forley's unexpected death, it is emphatically because I understood nothing of the matter, on knocking at this door; and therefore felt myself bound, as executor, to clear it up. That, on my word of honour, is the whole truth, so far as I am personally concerned."

"I feel quite sure of it, sir," I answered. "You mentioned Mr. Forley's death, just now, as unexpected. May I inquire if you were present, and if he has left any last instructions?"

"Three hours before Mr. Forley's death," said Mr. Dalcott, "his medical attendant left him apparently in a fair way of recovery. The change for the worse took place so suddenly, and was accompanied by such severe suffering, as entirely to prevent him from communicating his last wishes to any one. When I reached his house, he was insensible. I have since examined his papers. Not one of them refers to the present time, or to the serious matter which now occupies us. In the absence of instructions, I must act cautiously on what you have told me; but I will be rigidly fair and just at the same time. The first thing to be done," he continued, addressing himself to Trottle, "is to hear what the man and woman, down-stairs, have to say. If you can supply me with writing-materials, I will take their declarations separately on the spot, in your presence, and in the presence of the policeman who is watching the house. To-morrow I will send copies of those declarations, accompanied by a full statement of the case, to Mr. and Mrs. Bayne in Canada (both of whom know me well as the late Mr. Forley's legal adviser); and I will suspend all proceedings, on my part, until I hear from them, or from their solicitor in London. In the present posture of affairs this is all I can safely do."

We could do no less than agree with him, and thank him for his frank and honest manner of meeting us. It was arranged that I should send over the writing materials from my lodgings; and, to my unutterable joy and relief, it was also readily acknowledged that the poor little orphan boy could find no fitter refuge than my old arms were longing to offer him, and no safer protection for the night than my roof could give. Trottle hastened away up-stairs, as actively as if he had been a young man, to fetch the child down.

And he brought him down to me without another moment of delay, and I went on my knees before the poor little Mite, and embraced him, and asked him if he would go with me to where I lived? He held me away for a moment, and his wan, shrewd little eyes looked sharp at me. Then he clung close to me all at once, and said:

"I'm a-going along with you, I am—and so I tell you!"

For inspiring the poor neglected child with this trust in my old self, I thanked Heaven, then, with all my heart and soul, and I thank it now!

I bundled the poor darling up in my own cloak, and I carried him in my own arms across the road. Peggy was lost in speechless amazement to behold me trudging out of

breath up-stairs, with a strange pair of poor little legs under my arm ; but, she began to cry over the child the moment she saw him, like a sensible woman as she always was, and she still cried her eyes out over him in a comfortable manner, when he at last lay fast asleep, tucked up by my hands in Trottle's bed.

"And Trottle, bless you, my dear man," said I, kissing his hand, as he looked on : "the forlorn baby came to this refuge through you, and he will help you on your way to Heaven."

Trottle answered that I was his dear mistress, and immediately went and put his head out at an open window on the landing, and looked into the back street for a quarter of an hour.

That very night, as I sat thinking of the poor child, and of another poor child who is never to be thought about enough at Christmas-time, the idea came into my mind which I have lived to execute, and in the realisation of which I am the happiest of women this day.

"The executor will sell that House, Trottle?" said I.

"Not a doubt of it, ma'am, if he can find a purchaser."

"I'll buy it."

I have often seen Trottle pleased ; but, I never saw him so perfectly enchanted as he was when I confided to him, which I did, then and there, the purpose that I had in view.

To make short of a long story—and what story would not be long, coming from the lips of an old woman like me, unless it was made short by main force!—I bought the House. Mrs. Bayne had her father's blood in her ; she evaded the opportunity of forgiving and generous reparation that was offered her, and disowned the child ; but, I was prepared for that, and, loved him all the more for having no one in the world to look to, but me.

I am getting into a flurry by being over-pleased, and I dare say I am as incoherent as need be. I bought the House, and I altered

it from the basement to the roof, and I turned it into a Hospital for Sick Children.

Never mind by what degrees my little adopted boy came to the knowledge of all the sights and sounds in the streets, so familiar to other children and so strange to him ; never mind by what degrees he came to be pretty, and childish, and winning, and companionable, and to have pictures and toys about him, and suitable playmates. As I write, I look across the road to my Hospital, and there is the darling (who has gone over to play) nodding at me out of one of the once lonely windows, with his dear chubby face backed up by Trottle's waistcoat as he lifts my pet for "Grandma" to see.

Many an Eye I see in that House now, but it is never in solitude, never in neglect. Many an Eye I see in that House now, that is more and more radiant every day with the light of returning health. As my precious darling has changed beyond description for the brighter and the better, so do the not less precious darlings of poor women change in that House every day in the year. For which I humbly thank that Gracious Being whom the restorer of the Wilow's son and of the Ruler's daughter, instructed all mankind to call their Father.

* * The announcement by Mr. Dickens that he would not this year publish a Christmas Number of "All the Year Round," as had hitherto been his custom, was very much regretted by thousands in the British Isles. The re-appearance of the tales herein printed will be hailed with pleasure by a large number of persons to whom they are either unknown, or by whom they are now unattainable. They are, perhaps, amongst the best pieces of imaginative writing ever produced. At the time of their publication they called forth most marked approval, and critics and the public alike received them with general applause. Amidst all competitive issues, they still present the best shilling's-worth of Christmas literature ever produced.

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